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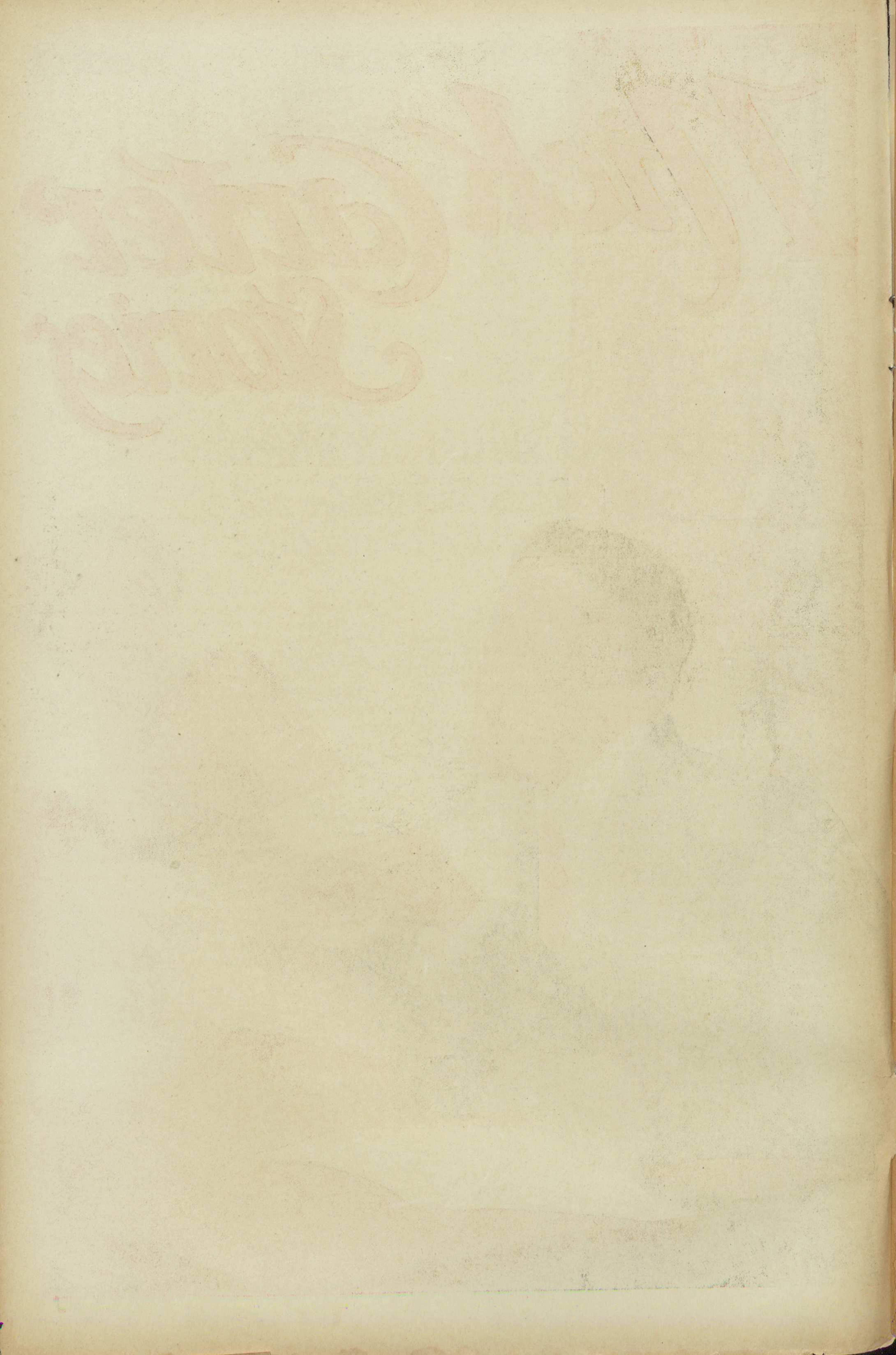
Nick Carter Stories

HALF A MILLION RANSOM

OR Nick Carter and
the Needy Nine



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NICK CARTER STORIES

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No. 123.

NEW YORK, January 16, 1915.

Price Five Cents.

HALF A MILLION RANSOM; Or, NICK CARTER AND THE NEEDY NINE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOMAN WHO FAINTED.

Nick Carter caught sight of the couple only by chance. His touring car, in which he was seated with his chauffeur and Patsy Garvan, his junior assistant, was speeding through one of the winding driveways in Central Park, New York, and heading for Fifty-ninth Street.

"Hold on! Slow down, Danny!" he cried to his chauffeur. "That woman has fainted, or is in a fit."

The woman was lying on the greensward near a diverging driveway, and some fifty yards from where Danny Maloney, startled by the detective's sudden sharp commands, brought the touring car to a quick stop.

A girl in a white apron and a starched linen cap was bending over the woman and gazing around affrightedly, uncertain what to do. Seeing the car stop and the detectives alighting, she suppressed a scream for help and awaited their approach.

"She is down and out, chief, for fair," said Patsy, while they ran toward the couple.

"Fainted, most likely," said Nick tersely. "If more serious, we'll rush her to the nearest physician, or call an ambulance."

"By Jove, she's getting up!" cried Patsy. "It's not so bad, chief, after all. She's not completely in the soup."

They were rapidly approaching the couple while speaking.

The nurse, or governess, for such the young woman appeared to be, had arisen and was assisting the other to her feet.

She was a well-dressed woman of thirty-five, with an abundance of wavy auburn hair and rather thin features, fairly prepossessing, but then quite pale. She was wiping a white froth from her lips, and appeared weak and confused.

"What's the trouble?" Nick asked, addressing the nurse. "When was she taken ill? Do you know her?"

He now suspected that the woman might be subject to fits, and that she would recover without medical aid.

"No, sir, I don't know her," replied the girl. "I was tending the children just around the curve, sir, when a boy ran up and told me that a woman had fainted. He pointed this way, and I hurried to help her, and that's all I can tell you."

"I shall be all right in a few moments," said the woman, evidently striving to pull herself together. "Don't be alarmed, nor do anything more. I shall come out of it."

"Are you subject to such attacks?" Nick inquired, turning to her, while Patsy also drew nearer.

"Yes, sir, at times. It's epilepsy, sir, but this was only a slight attack. I must have come out of it very quickly."

"Do you want a physician?"

"No, sir. I shall be able to go home presently."

"Where do you live?"

"In Eighty-first Street."

"What name? I ask only lest you have a second attack."

"Miss Margaret Hanson, sir. But I shall not have another attack at present. I never have two in quick succession. I now am able to go, sir, thanking you for your kindness."

"I will take you home in my automobile, Miss Hanson, if you wish me to do so," said Nick kindly.

"Oh, no, sir, thank you," she quickly objected, gradually drawing away. "These attacks are not as serious as they appear. It will do me good to walk home, sir, thanking you again."

She bowed and moved away with the last, evidently quite herself again, and Nick turned to Patsy and started to return to his touring car, in which Danny was waiting.

The girl in an apron and starched cap was just departing around a curve in the driveway some thirty yards

distant, her trim figure partly hidden by some intervening shrubbery.

"Come on," said Nick. "It was nothing serious, after all."

He recalled the last with rather grim sentiments a few minutes later.

"An ordinary fit, chief, wasn't it?" questioned Patsy.

"Yes, but only a mild one, as she said. I knew what the trouble was, all right, when I saw her wiping froth from her lips."

"What a beastly affliction!"

"Beastly hardly expresses it," said Nick. "Any disorder that knocks one out without warning is a deucedly bad affliction. If she had— Hello! What now?"

A cry of alarm came from the direction in which the nurse had disappeared. Looking back, for Nick and Patsy had nearly reached the waiting touring car, they now beheld the girl running wildly hither and thither, excitedly wringing her hands, and evidently in a frantic search for some one.

Beyond the fringe of shrubbery flanking the curve of the driveway stood a baby carriage containing a child about two years old, then crying piteously.

"By Jove, there's more trouble," said Patsy. "What's the matter with her? She spoke of tending the children. I can see only one. She must have lost track of the other."

"It has strayed away, probably, or—"

Nick broke off abruptly, wheeling sharply around to gaze in the direction Miss Margaret Hanson had taken.

She had disappeared. Neither in the driveway, the adjoining grounds, nor in any part of the near avenue, was there any sign of her.

Nick Carter's strong, clean-cut face underwent a decided change. He turned to Patsy, saying hurriedly:

"By Jove! This may be a put-up job. Get a move on, Patsy. Hunt up that woman who fainted. Find her, if possible, and keep your eye on her."

"You think—"

"A child in charge of that nurse may have been stolen. The woman's fit may have been only a trick to lure the nurse away while—"

"Holy smoke!" Patsy interrupted. "I've got you."

He darted away at top speed with the last in search of Margaret Hanson.

Nick already had turned, and was hurrying toward the distracted nurse, who still was seeking here and there like one bereft of her senses. Tears were streaming down her cheeks when the detective approached her and grasped her arm, saying firmly yet kindly:

"Come, come, my girl; calm yourself. What's the trouble?"

"It's Amy, sir," moaned the girl. "I can't find her."

"You left her here?"

"Yes, sir, when I went to aid that woman. I told her to stay right here and tend the baby. Oh, I must find a policeman, and—"

"Stop a moment," said Nick, detaining her. "I can do more than a policeman. I am a detective. Compose yourself, now, and tell me just what occurred. I will help you find the child. How old is she?"

Glancing sharply around, Nick had seen plainly that the child would be easily discovered unless she had strayed to a considerable distance, which was quite improbable in the short time the nurse had been absent. The circumstances,

moreover, already led him to suspect something far more serious.

Somewhat encouraged by his assurances, the nurse governed her agitation and hastened to reply.

"Amy is six years old, sir."

"How long had you been with the woman when I joined you?"

"Not more than a couple of minutes."

"What is your name?"

"Lucy Sloan. I am employed by Mr. John Madden, sir, who lives in the big marble house on the other side of the avenue. I have been there five years, sir, ever since Amy was a baby. Oh, what shall I do to find her? The master's heart will break unless I can find her."

The girl pointed to a palatial marble residence on the opposite side of Fifth Avenue, that of a millionaire banker and broker, whose operations in the stock market a dozen years before had given him not only vast wealth, but also a national reputation. He then had subsided, however, and during more recent years he had devoted only part of his time to business, though he still retained his interests in the firm of which he long had been the senior member, that of Madden, Mellen & Mack.

Though not acquainted with the other members of the firm, Nick long had been a personal friend of John Madden, having served him in several important financial cases. This fact, together with certain circumstances in the family history of the man, the nature of which will presently appear, not only caused Nick to regard the disappearance of the child more seriously, but also to take up the affair with increasing zest.

Turning to Lucy Sloan, who was a pretty girl in the twenties, and whose face was a voucher for her honesty, Nick said more earnestly:

"I am well acquainted with Mr. Madden. In fact, Lucy, I am the first person on whom he would call for aid in case his little girl is really lost. Tell me, now, just what occurred here that sent you to assist the woman who fainted."

Lucy Sloan, however, could add but little to what she already had stated. She had been walking in the park about ten minutes before, the immediate locality then being otherwise deserted, when a boy about ten years old came running toward her, crying that a woman had fainted, at the same time pointing around the curve in the direction from which he had approached. It then was about four o'clock on a charming May afternoon.

Without waiting to question the boy, Lucy hurriedly directed him to watch the two children, and she then ran to the woman's assistance, with whom Nick had observed her two or three minutes later. Returning while the detective was talking with the woman, Lucy found only the child crying in the carriage, and at once began a vain and frantic search for the missing girl. The boy also had disappeared, and all had transpired within a period of five or six minutes.

In the meantime, too, Margaret Hanson had vanished. For Patsy Garvan returned just as the nurse ended her hurried statements, and his face alone told the story.

"Couldn't find her, eh?" Nick tersely questioned.

"Not hide nor hair of her, chief," said Patsy; "nor any one who had seen a woman of her description. She must have made a bee line for the avenue, and taken a conveyance of some kind."

Nick glanced around again and sized up the possibilities

of the immediate locality. Twenty yards away was a divergent driveway running north, in which, as well as the one near by, the tracks left by the tires of automobiles could be distinctly seen. None of these denoted that a car had recently passed that way, however, nor had Nick seen any during the episodes described.

"Are you in the habit of coming here with the children in the afternoon?" he asked a bit abruptly, again addressing the nurse.

"Yes, sir, every pleasant day."

"At about this time?"

"Yes, sir; from three until five."

"Did you see any one looking at you, or acting suspiciously, before the lad came and spoke to you?"

"I did not, sir. There was no one near here except people passing at times."

"Would you know the boy if you were to see him again?"

"Indeed, sir, I would," Lucy declared emphatically. "He is about ten years old, with red hair and freckled face. I'd know him among a million."

"Was he well dressed?"

"Not very, sir."

"Did he appear like a street gamin, or somewhat refined?"

"More like a boy of the street, sir, and he spoke like one."

"How so?"

"He said he'd mind the kid, sir, and he called the woman a skirt," explained Lucy. "I knew what he meant, sir, but only rough boys talk like that."

"True," Nick nodded. "At what time does Mr. Madden usually come home?"

"About five o'clock, sir, and he always wants the children there when he comes in. They are his only comfort, sir, since the mistress died. It would break his heart to lose Amy. Oh, what shall I do? I'll go crazy, sir, unless we can find her."

"That certainly would do no good, my girl, though I appreciate your feelings," Nick replied.

Then, turning to Patsy, he added quickly:

"You rejoin Danny, and take a turn around here with the car. See what you can learn, and also keep an eye open for the lad this girl has described. Report to me at Mr. Madden's residence. I'm going over there with the nurse and will wait until he comes. I can explain this case to him much better than she. You understand."

"Sure thing, chief," said Patsy, with unusual gravity. "I'm on, all right."

CHAPTER II.

A VOICE BY WIRE.

Five o'clock that afternoon found Nick Carter and Patsy seated in Mr. John Madden's handsomely furnished library in the Fifth Avenue residence mentioned, in front of which the detective's touring car then was standing.

Their only companion was Mr. Madden himself, who arrived soon after Nick was admitted by the butler, and the detective already had stated the distressing circumstances.

Arriving in the meantime, Patsy could make only a negative report. Despite his energetic efforts for upward of half an hour, he could find no trace of the un-

known lad, or the missing girl, nor any person who could add to the information already obtained.

Mr. Madden, though a man of nearly seventy, had received the terrible news with characteristic fortitude and habitual dignity and composure. He had figured in too many serious situations, and suffered too many domestic afflictions, for his self-possession to be easily overcome.

He was not less deeply affected, nevertheless, for, as the nurse had said, his two children were his only joy and comfort. He had no others. He had lost his first wife thirty years before. His second, a beautiful girl much younger than himself, had died shortly after the birth of her second child.

Since then, though he had retained his magnificent residence and several of his faithful and devoted servants, Mr. John Madden had found but little enjoyment in life beyond that derived from the two pretty children a loving wife had left him.

He sat gazing at Nick Carter at five o'clock that afternoon, with tears in his eyes and his hands gripping his knees—a portly, smoothly shaved man with gray hair and a remarkably attractive countenance, despite the shadow of sorrow that never left him. He was saying deliberately, with a voice rendered steady only by the strength of a superior will:

"I agree with you, Nick, in that Lucy is not at fault. That would be very unlike her. She has been faithful, always cautious and careful, during the five years she has been in my service. No, I will not censure her."

"It really would be very unjust," Nick said earnestly. "She did perfectly right in acting upon her impulse to aid a woman said to be in distress, and she cannot reasonably be blamed for not suspecting that she was the victim of a put-up job. Even with all of my experience, Mr. Madden, I did not at first suspect it."

"Do you now feel sure of it?" Mr. Madden gravely questioned.

"Yes, absolutely," said the detective. "The circumstances admit of no other interpretation. This whole business was cut and dried, carefully planned, and cleverly executed."

"You reason that—"

"It may be told in a nutshell," Nick interposed. "No such lad as Lucy Sloan described would have remained to watch the two children while she ran to aid a fainting woman. A well-bred boy, accustomed to obey his elders, might have done so, but not a lad of the streets. He, boylike, would have returned to learn how the woman fared and to see all that occurred."

"Sure!" put in Patsy expressively. "I know. I've been there."

"In view of what occurred, moreover, the almost immediate recovery of the woman shows that she was only feigning. That is confirmed, too, by her speedy disappearance. She had to make a quick get-away before the absence of Amy was discovered. She got a move on, I remember, the moment the nurse started to return to the children."

"You do not believe, then, that her name is Margaret Hanson?"

"Not for a moment," said Nick. "That was only a blind. She is a very cool and clever woman, Mr. Madden, and one of an equally clever gang by whom your daughter has been abducted. The circumstances admit of no other conclusion."

"My Lord, this is terrible!" Mr. Madden said, with a groan.

"I do not think, however, that the child is in any immediate personal peril," Nick quickly added. "She probably has been abducted with a view to bleeding you out of a large sum of money."

"I will pay any sum, Nick, to have her safely restored to me."

"No, no, don't do that," Nick protested. "Surely not at present. It may become necessary, of course, after we have exhausted all other resources, but not until then. You owe it to the community, as well as to yourself, to defer yielding to such knavery as long as you can consistently do so. In the meantime I will devote all of my energies to running down the crooks and finding the child."

"But they may kill her, or—"

"Not at present," Nick insisted. "Not as long as they see a ghost of a chance of forcing you to comply with their demands. That would be the worst step they could take. Have no fear of it, Mr. Madden. They will not kill the goose from which they hope to get a golden egg."

"What do you advise?" Mr. Madden asked gravely.

"I want you to give me entire charge of the case."

"I would demur over it, Nick, if that proposition came from any other man. Coming from you—well, I know I cannot do better than accept it."

"I think so, too."

"That settles it, then."

"Very good," said Nick. "You must, therefore, take no steps beyond what I may direct. In imposing that condition, Mr. Madden, I have only a word to add. I will do all that you could do, or the entire metropolitan police, to trace and recover your daughter. I will also accomplish it before she suffers any serious harm, even though I am finally forced to throw up my hands and pay a ransom for her safe return."

"I understand, Nick, and have absolute faith in your judgment," Mr. Madden said feelingly. "I give you entire charge of the case. You evidently think, I infer, that we shall hear from her abductors."

"Hear from them!" Nick exclaimed, smiling. "Don't you doubt that for a moment, Mr. Madden. You will hear from them much sooner than you expect, providing I have sized up the case correctly."

"Well, possibly."

"What would you do," Nick added, "if you were engaged in such knavery? Your first step would be to prevent too much publicity, too great activity by the police, both of which could best be insured by communicating promptly with an anxious parent and stating the precise situation. You will hear from these rascals within an hour, unless I am much mistaken, either by telephone or—"

Nick's prediction was verified even while he was speaking. The bell of a telephone on the library table interrupted him. He laughed in somewhat sinister fashion, and held up his hand.

"Keep your seat, Mr. Madden," said he. "I will see what's doing. This may be the first gun on the skirmish line."

"Gee! My money goes on that," put in Patsy.

Nick turned and picked up the telephone while speaking. Removing the receiver, he called hurriedly, almost perfectly imitating Mr. Madden's voice:

"Hello! Hello!"

A woman's voice came over the wire. It was a cold, curt, sinister voice, with a ring of metallic hardness denoting will power, decision, and a sort of bulldog aggressiveness:

"I want Mr. John Madden. Is he at home?"

"Where in thunder have I heard that voice?"

The question flashed through the detective's mind the instant he heard it. Still imitating that of the venerable millionaire, Nick quickly answered:

"I am he. John Madden is talking. Who are you?"

The response came with more threatening intonation:

"Never mind who I am. You keep your trap closed, and let me do the talking. If you butt in with any questions, I'll hang up the receiver. Do you get me?"

"Yes," said Nick.

"Listen, then, and don't butt in," continued the woman. "It's about a piece of live stock that you must have missed by this time. I've got the lamb, and she's all right. Whether she'll come home all right, wagging her tail behind her, depends on yourself. You'll get a letter to-morrow morning stating the conditions. It will be mailed to your business office—and it will mean business, too; you can bet on that."

"Tell me—"

"You keep quiet," snapped the woman. "I'll do all the telling that's necessary. You do the listening."

"Go on."

"The letter you will receive to-morrow morning will explain all. In the meantime the lost lamb will not be harmed, and you must not take steps to find her. If you do, mind you, we will surely fleece her instead of you. Don't publish the facts. Don't inform the police. Don't kick up a stir of any kind. Do you get me?"

"Yes," Nick repeated simply.

"Mark this, too; don't you employ Nick Carter in this affair, as you have in others, or it will be all over but the shouting—and the burial. We'll return her to you in a wooden raincoat. That goes, mind you, and that's all for the present. Beware of any deviations from these instructions. Wait for your letter to-morrow morning."

Nick heard the quick click of the hook on the distant telephone when the threatening speaker hung up the receiver, and he knew that any attempt to prolong the interview would be utterly futile. He replaced the telephone on the library table, then turned and told his companions all that he had heard.

The pale, anxious face of the noted money king became a little brighter while he listened. He found a grain of comfort and encouragement in knowing, at least, that his missing child was in no immediate danger.

"You were right, Nick," he declared. "The scoundrels have hastened to communicate with me."

"I felt sure of that, Mr. Madden."

"But I have made one terrible mistake."

"What is that?"

"In putting you on the case. If that woman's threat—"

"That will not be executed," Nick interrupted, resuming his seat. "The rascals must know that you may have notified the police by this time, or even have appealed to me. That threat was only a bluff. Take it from me, Mr. Madden, they will not harm the child at present, do what you will. They have not abducted her for that purpose."

"That's a good safe gamble," supplemented Patsy. "They are out for the coin, Mr. Madden, and nothing else. There may be a second woman in the case, chief, or Margaret Hanson, so called, did not recognize you. If she had, they already would know you are on the case."

"There is a second woman," Nick replied. "Furthermore, Patsy, she is some crook with whom I am acquainted."

"You recognized her voice?"

"Positively! But I cannot tell whose voice. I am absolutely sure, nevertheless, that I have heard it before."

"Not Margaret Hanson's voice?"

"No."

"Some other woman, then, may have got away with the child. It may have been her voice."

"That is precisely what I suspect," said Nick. "Is Amy a child, Mr. Madden, who would readily go with a stranger?"

"No, no; quite the contrary," Mr. Madden quickly assured him. "She is very shy of strangers, and has been repeatedly cautioned against having anything to do with them out of doors."

"That may help us materially," said Nick.

"How so?"

"It would have been exceedingly risky to have abducted her by force," Nick explained. "A scream from the child would have been heard in half a dozen directions. It is ten to one, therefore, that she was abducted by some person with whom she is acquainted, perhaps of whom she is fond, even, and by whom she could easily have been influenced. Do you know of any woman, Mr. Madden, who would be guilty of such a crime?"

"No, indeed, I do not," he replied, after racking his brain for several moments. "Bear in mind, Nick, that Amy is only six years of age, also that my wife has been dead nearly two years, and that I since have had very few women visitors. I really know of none by whom the child could have been lured away—surely none capable of committing such a crime."

"Your servants are trustworthy?"

"Absolutely."

"Have you ever discharged one with whom the child was familiar, and who may be seeking revenge, as well as money?"

"No. I feel sure of that, Nick, also."

"I think we have covered all of the ground, then, for the present," Nick announced. "We will await further developments. I shall take no steps until to-morrow, after seeing the letter you are to receive in your morning mail. I will call at your business office at nine o'clock."

"Will it not be better, instead, for me to bring the letter to your office?" Mr. Madden earnestly questioned.

"Lest the rascals may discover that I call on you and am on the case?"

"Exactly."

"Don't let that worry you," said Nick significantly. "I will call on you in disguise. As a matter of fact, however, I don't much care if they do learn that I am after them. It may draw them from cover and into making some move that will prove disastrous to them. You leave it all to me, Mr. Madden, and meet me in your business office at nine to-morrow morning."

Nick arose with the last and took his hat from the table.

"I will send in a card bearing a fictitious name," he added. "Henderson Black."

"Henderson Black," repeated the banker. "I will remember it."

It was nearly six o'clock when Nick departed with Patsy. Half an hour later both were seated at dinner in the detective's Madison Avenue residence, in company with his chief assistant, Chick Carter, who had been fully informed of the case.

"There are several obvious points, Nick, at least," he remarked. "The crooks must have known that Lucy Sloan was in the habit of taking the two children to the park each afternoon, also where she would be at a certain time, and just how the job could be safely done."

"True," Nick agreed. "That goes without saying."

"And that familiarity with her daily doings, together with the fact that they got away with the child so quickly and without any outcry, are very significant," Chick added. "The child must have known her abductor, and the latter must have known that the child could be easily and quickly enticed away."

"Certainly. That also is obvious."

"Who is the woman, then, or man, as the case may be, who has been so friendly with the child to have felt sure of being able to successfully pull off such a job?"

Nick laughed a bit grimly.

"That is a pertinent question, Chick, more easily asked than answered," he replied. "It is useless to speculate upon it at this stage of the game. We will await the promised letter from the rascals. We then may find the answer between the lines."

CHAPTER III.

AN AUDACIOUS DEMAND.

Nick Carter would not have been recognized by his most intimate friend when, at nine o'clock the following morning, he entered the Broad Street building in which the banking and brokerage offices of Madden, Mellen & Mack were located.

Nick appeared, in fact, like an elderly investor in stocks and bonds, a sedate and deliberate old gentleman, modestly clad, and who hooked his cane over his arm while he produced and tendered a card to a clerk in the outer office, at the same time requesting an interview with the head of the firm.

Nick was immediately conducted to an interior room, in which all three members of the firm were seated. It contained three roll-top desks, a table laden with books, papers, and documents, and a partly screened stand in one corner, on which was a large typewriter.

Nick noticed that the machine was covered and that the stenographer had not yet arrived.

Mr. Mellen, the second member of the firm, was an energetic man of middle age, their operator on the floor of the Stock Exchange, which necessitated his absence from the office during most of the business hours. He arose to go, in fact, very soon after the detective entered.

The junior member was David Mack, who acted as cashier for the firm. He was much younger, still under forty, a well-built, clean-cut man, with a smoothly shaved face, quite dark and attractive. He was personally the most up-to-date and striking man of the three.

Mr. Madden, looking pale and anxious after a sleepless night, at once arose to receive the detective.

"I would never know you, Nick, had I forgotten your fictitious name," he said, smiling gravely, while he shook hands with Nick. "I have confided in my partners, of course, from whom I have no secrets. Their discretion may be safely relied upon."

Nick acknowledged the introductions that followed, shaking hands with both bankers and remarking agreeably:

"You have done quite right, Mr. Madden. These gentlemen will, I am sure, do what I advise in this matter."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Carter, surely," Mellen quickly asserted. "We feel nearly as anxious as Mr. Madden concerning his daughter, and fully as indignant over this outrage. We will do whatever you suggest."

David Mack also nodded approvingly, saying familiarly, with an expressive gleam in his dark eyes:

"It's more than an outrage, Carter. It's deviltry, infernal deviltry, of the most satanic kind. Hanging is too good for such scoundrels."

"I agree with you, Mr. Mack," Nick replied.

"As for doing what you advise, Carter, it looks to me as if I might do very much more," Mack forcibly added. "But I'm game—I'm game for it. I'll show these knaves what kind of wood shingles are made of, providing I can trick them in some way and turn the tables on them."

"That must be Greek to Mr. Carter," said Mellen, rising to go. "He must see that letter in order to understand you."

"Yes, yes, the letter will explain," John Madden put in. "It came in our morning mail, as promised, and it fully confirms your theory. Hand it to him, David. Let him see for himself."

"It's a dastardly, devilish outrage," Mack declared again, handing Nick the communication in question. "Such miscreants ought to be tarred and feathered and then burned at a stake. Read it, Carter, for yourself."

Nick took the sheet of paper and examined it. He saw at a glance that it had been torn from a pad of perfectly plain paper, obviously to preclude tracing the writer by means of it.

Instead of having been written, however, the communication was neatly printed with a lead pencil, occasional erasures denoting that considerable care had been taken in forming the printed letters.

The communication read as follows:

"MR. JOHN MADDEN: The undersigned need money—of which you have a thousand times more than you really need.

"In order to separate you from the amount we require, therefore, we have begun with separating you from something more dear to you than money—your child.

"The situation now is a simple one. It needs no elaboration. You want your stolen child. We want half a million dollars.

"That is the price you must pay—or suffer an only alternative.

"If you submit and consent to pay this ransom, acting directly in accord with instructions we shall give, your child will be quickly and safely restored to you.

"If you refuse, or attempt to dicker over the payment, we will send you the girl—laid out for burial. There is no middle course.

"Half a million ransom—or death.

"This is the only letter we shall send you. We refuse, furthermore, to treat directly with you. You are too

old a man to engage in such business. Negotiations must be continued, therefore, and the ransom finally paid, by a third party—some representative in whom you have absolute confidence.

"Lest you resort to subterfuge, however, and appoint some one who would make trouble for us, Nick Carter for example, instead of rigidly following our instructions, which is imperative to the safety of your daughter, we appoint a representative who should be entirely satisfactory to you—Mr. David Mack, your junior partner.

"It is up to you, now, to command him to rigidly follow our instructions. Any deviation from them will be fatal to your hopes—and fatal to your child.

"David Mack will hear from us later. A personal interview with him is necessary. He must do precisely what we direct. As long as he does, he will be in no personal peril. If he attempts trickery, however, he will meet the fate of a trickster. No more need be said. There remains only to act. And upon how you act—all will depend.

"David Mack must make no move, however, until he hears from me. He will be given explicit instructions, which he must follow to the letter. Beware of any deviation from them—and of the vengeance of

"RALPH REDLAW, Chief of the Needy Nine."

Twice from beginning to end, without once looking up from the pencil-printed sheet, Nick Carter read this threatening communication, with its amazingly audacious demand. His face did not reflect his thoughts. If he read between the lines the answer to Chick Carter's pertinent question, or even a hint at the answer, his serious, unchanging countenance did not reveal it.

John Madden watched him anxiously.

David Mack gazed at him with fixed and searching scrutiny.

Neither banker broke the silence until the detective looked up from the printed sheet.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Mack then asked bluntly. "Isn't it the limit? Could you beat it?"

"How to beat the rascals is a more pertinent question," Nick replied, with grim austerity.

"True. That goes without saying."

"What are your views, Nick?" Mr. Madden asked, more gravely. "I am anxious for your opinion."

"The scoundrels mean business, Mr. Madden," Nick replied, glancing again at the letter. "I take no stock in this signature, Ralph Redlaw, Chief of the Needy Nine. The name is fictitious. Furthermore, I don't believe that there are nine persons engaged in this felony. Crooks seldom take chances by trusting so many confederates unless the size of the conspiracy requires it. That is not essential in this case. Four or five, or even three, could have done the job as easily as nine. This entire signature is only a blind."

"Surely," Mack nodded. "That's my opinion."

"The letter was printed, instead of written, in order to preclude identification of the sender by means of his handwriting," Nick continued. "Plain paper was used with a like purpose. As I have said, however, the scoundrels mean business. Furthermore, they are not ordinary criminals, not a gang of thugs and illiterate crooks. The letter plainly shows them to be persons of intelligence, as well as knavish determination. They certainly mean business."

"Business be hanged!" Mack blurted. "So do we mean business, Carter, or should. Half a million ransom—why, that's outrageous, absurd, utterly preposterous. I never would pay it. I would spend half a million, instead, in running down this gang of mercenaries and bringing them to justice."

"How would you set about it?" Nick inquired tentatively.

"Well, I don't know," Mack admitted. "I cannot say offhand. I would find a way, nevertheless, if any way exists. Half a million—it's devilish, nothing less. I never would pay it."

"Don't say that, Dave," Mr. Madden gravely protested. "It is an outrageous demand, I admit, but the writer of that letter made one true statement, at least—that I have been separated from something more dear to me than money. I would pay the ransom within an hour, Dave, if convinced that my darling's life depended upon it."

"Well, that's for you to decide," David Mack rejoined. "I appreciate your feelings, of course, but I first would give these miscreants a desperate run for the money. I'll do my part, Carter, you can bet on that. I'll take any kind of a chance to get the best of them. They may find they have made a big mistake in appointing me to conduct their infernal negotiations. I'll find some way to thwart them."

David Mack looked quite capable of doing what he asserted, for he was a clean-cut, athletic man, whose indignation was evidently stirred to its depths. His bitter voice and flashing eyes, moreover, spoke volumes.

Nick gazed at him for a moment before replying, then said approvingly:

"Your remarks have the true ring, Mr. Mack, and I'm glad to note it. On the contrary, however, you must not undertake to thwart these scoundrels."

"Not undertake it!" Dave gasped. "Good heavens! you don't mean, Carter, that you advise paying this ransom?"

"No, I do not," Nick assured him. "But the situation is one that requires skillful handling. A blunder of any kind might cost the child her life. I mean what I said in the beginning, Mr. Mack. You must be governed by my instructions. I am better able than you to devise a way to foil these knaves and recover the stolen child."

"Very true," Dave quickly admitted. "That will be agreeable to me, Carter, more than agreeable. I will do whatever you direct. Command me in any way. I'm game. I'll take any kind of a chance. What are your plans?"

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNEXPECTED CLEW.

Nick Carter was not long in deciding what plans he would adopt. He took the Redlaw letter from the table, saying, while he folded it and slipped it into his pocket:

"I will keep this for the present. I may not be able to trace the writer, but we will take advantage of one fact, at least, that he wants a personal interview with Mr. Mack."

"How would it work, Carter, to have me secretly shadowed?" Dave inquired. "We might in that way contrive to locate the entire gang."

"There would be nothing in attempting anything of that kind," Nick quickly objected. "The crooks engaged in

this job are not blockheads. They will guard against being discovered by any such trick as that."

"You may be right," Mack thoughtfully allowed.

"I know I am right," Nick insisted. "You must be governed strictly by my instructions."

"You may depend upon that."

"To begin with, then, you must inform me by telephone as soon as you hear from Redlaw and learn when and where you are to meet him. If I happen to be out of my house, you may state the circumstances to one of my assistants."

"I will do so."

"State precisely what you learn and what is expected of you. The rascal will devise some way of safely meeting you."

"What shall I say to him? What—"

"We must play for time," Nick interrupted. "I want time in which to get in my work. You must discuss the matter with that object in view."

"I understand."

"Pretend that you cannot definitely settle the matter in a single interview; that you must confer again with Mr. Madden before doing so, and that a second interview will be necessary," Nick added. "Employ an argument, or subterfuge, in fact, that will enable you to stave off a definite agreement with the scamps."

"I've got you," Dave nodded. "Leave it to me."

"Having kept the appointment and accomplished that much, you must let me know all of the particulars as quickly as possible," Nick proceeded. "Telephone to me, however, instead of coming to my office. I will then give you further instructions. They will depend, of course, upon what you report to me."

"Certainly. I understand you perfectly."

"That is all, then, at present," said Nick. "Do only what I have directed, Mr. Mack, and leave me to do the rest. If I find that I—"

A knock on the door interrupted him. A clerk from the outer office entered.

"Mr. Littlefield is here, sir," said he, addressing the cashier of the firm. "He wants to go through his account with you this morning, as you requested."

"Yes, yes, to be sure. Tell him I will be with him in just a moment."

David Mack arose while speaking, then turned to the detective.

"It will take me a quarter hour," said he. "Will you excuse me? I will return as soon as—"

"There is no occasion," Nick interposed. "You know what is required of you, and I shall leave in a very few minutes."

"Very well. You will hear from me later, then."

"Certainly. As soon as you have heard from Redlaw."

"Trust me for that," Dave nodded, extending his hand. "You can bank on me, Carter, to do precisely what you have directed."

"Much may depend upon it. Good morning."

David Mack turned and hastened from the room.

Nick gazed at the aged banker, noting his haggard expression and that there were tears in his eyes.

"Don't lose heart, Mr. Madden," he said kindly. "I think we will finally outwit these rascals and get the best of them."

"Do you really think so?" Mr. Madden questioned, a bit doubtfully.

"I do, indeed."

"But tell me frankly, Nick," entreated the banker. "Have you any definite clew, any suspicions that really warrant the encouragement you give me? I wish to know the worst."

Nick was averse to deceiving him. He realized only too keenly that he had, as yet, no definite clew to the identity of the crooks, and that he then was banking almost entirely upon the arrangements he had just made with David Mack, and upon what they would bring forth. He shook his head and rejoined, a bit gravely:

"Frankly, Mr. Madden, I can only reply in the negative."

"I feared so."

"I feel confident, nevertheless, that I soon shall pick up a thread worth following," Nick quickly added. "I never can tell when that may happen. It may come when least expected. I will immediately inform you in that case and relieve your anxiety."

"Do so, Nick, by all means."

"I suppose in case you are absent that your stenographer will forward any message I might send."

Nick glanced at the covered typewriter mentioned, but with no idea that his prediction of a moment before was about to be verified.

"Some one would surely forward a message," Mr. Madden replied. "Our stenographer left us a few days ago, however, and her position has not yet been filled."

"H'm, I see! Why did she leave?"

"I really do not know. Partly, I imagine, because she frequently had to come to my residence for dictation. I do not come to the office regularly, you know, and I often had occasion to telephone her to come to my house. She may have objected to that, though she never said so."

"A young woman?" questioned Nick.

"Well, not very young. She must be nearly thirty."

"How long was she employed here?"

"About four months."

"She went to your house quite frequently, you say?"

"Yes. Several times each week."

"Was she in the habit of seeing your daughter?"

"Yes, indeed. She was quite fond of Amy, and occasionally brought her candy. She—"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted, with brows contracting. "Who is this woman? What is her name?"

"Clara Randall."

"Do you know anything definite about her?"

"Only that she came well recommended and is very capable," said Mr. Madden. "I was sorry to lose her."

"What style of woman?" Nick persisted. "Describe her."

"She is quite a striking woman, very handsome and with fine figure."

"Light or dark?"

"She is a pronounced brunette, with a peculiarly pallid complexion and very expressive eyes. She—"

"That's enough!" Nick exclaimed, interrupting. "I know her."

"Know her?" Mr. Madden stared.

"As sure as you're a foot high," Nick declared emphatically. "You asked me a minute ago, Mr. Madden, whether I had any definite clew to these rascals. I now revoke what I said. I have a decidedly definite clew."

"Good heavens!" Mr. Madden exclaimed. "You don't

mean, Carter, that you suspect Clara Randall of this abduction?"

"That is precisely what I suspect."

"But why so? What do you know about her?"

"Enough to convince me that I am right," said Nick. "Her name is not Clara Randall. It is Kate Crandall. Notice the similarity. It is something more than a coincidence. You will remember, too, that I said I recognized the voice of the woman with whom I talked by telephone in your residence yesterday. I could not place the voice, then, but I now place it all right. It was Kate Crandall's voice. I will stake my reputation on that."

"But what do you know about her?" Mr. Madden repeated. "Is she a crook?"

"As crooked as a ribbon in a wind," Nick declared. "She twice has figured in cases that I was called upon to investigate."

"Heavens! Is it possible?"

"One was the mysterious disappearance of a well-known clergyman, the Reverend Austin Maybrick. The other was the supposed suicide of one Cyrus Darling, a married man, who was so completely captivated by Kate Crandall's wiles and beauty that he sold out his business and pretended to kill himself, in order to marry her and settle in parts unknown without being suspected. I was lucky enough to head off her game, however, and save the man his fortune, which was all she was after. She is as wily, tricky, and heartless a jade, Mr. Madden, as ever stood in leather."

"If that is the case—"

"There are no ifs, Mr. Madden, in regard to that," Nick again interrupted. "I know the woman's character from A to Z. Do you know where she has been living?"

"Yes. She has a suite in the Carleton, an apartment house on Lexington Avenue."

"Did have, not has," said Nick, a bit dryly. "Take it from me, Mr. Madden, she will have vanished from the Carleton. She is too clever to have overlooked the fact that she might be suspected of the abduction. But I will trace her. You leave that to me."

"Your arrangements with David, then—"

"Still go," Nick cut in tersely. "Let him proceed precisely as if I had not picked up this thread. I will be ready to take advantage of anything he may learn."

"I will inform him."

"In the meantime, too, I will start my assistants after Kate Crandall, and unless I am much mistaken, there soon will be something doing," Nick grimly predicted, rising abruptly. "That is all for this morning, Mr. Madden. You will hear from me later."

CHAPTER V.

HOW PATSY MADE GOOD.

Nick Carter returned to his business office, where he found Chick and Patsy awaiting him. He at once proceeded to tell them what he had learned, in the meantime removing his disguise and displaying the printed letter received by the elderly banker.

"Gee! it looks like a cinch, chief," commented Patsy, after Nick had concluded. "Kate Crandall has got in her work again, as sure as there's juice in a lemon."

"Undoubtedly, Patsy, and I'll wager that she will not slip through our fingers as elusively as in the two previ-

ous cases," Nick grimly predicted. "It was her boast, you remember, that she was too clever to be caught in the clutches of the law."

"She will have slipped a cog this time, all right, if we can lay hands on her."

"That is what we should set about doing, Nick, it strikes me," Chick suggested. "We surely ought to be able to pick up her trail, or that of the woman who pretended to faint and gave you the name of Margaret Hanson."

"That is precisely what we must do," Nick agreed. "The two women were confederates. They accomplished the abduction by means of that trick, and the ease with which Kate Crandall could lure the Madden child away. It's long odds that they had a motor car, too, for they would not have ventured undertaking to get away with her on foot. They must, in that case, have had a chauffeur, so we can bank on at least one man in the job, and very probably more."

"That boy also must have been in it, chief, or he would not have bolted," added Patsy. "He would have waited to find out whether the woman recovered, if he was on the level and really thought she had fainted."

"Very true, Patsy, and there is one probable fact of which we can take advantage."

"What's that, chief?"

"The woman who fainted has auburn hair, the boy red hair," said Nick. "It's a safe assumption, then, that they are mother and son."

"Gee! that's right, too."

"And there are comparatively few red-headed women with a red-headed son about ten years of age in greater New York, even," Nick added. "Inquiries at each of the precinct police stations, therefore, may enable us to locate the couple. If they live in the city, which is highly probable, some patrolman should be able to identify them."

"Why not start me on that trail, chief?" said Patsy. "It looks good to me."

"That is what I intend doing," Nick replied. "Take Danny and the touring car and cover the ground as quickly as possible."

"Trust me for that."

"Telephone me immediately if you make any discovery," Nick directed. "I shall remain here until I receive a communication from David Mack."

"You expect one to-day?" Chick questioned.

"I expect one at any moment. The crooks will not defer bringing their scheme to a head. Delay would be dangerous, and they will hasten to get in their work."

"That does, indeed, seem probable," Chick allowed.

"We will wait here, therefore, and learn what instructions Mack receives. We then can determine what steps we may take to the best advantage."

"True."

"But I'm to go at once, chief?" questioned Patsy, who had been hurriedly making his preparations.

"Certainly," said Nick. "Incidentally, too, when in that locality, drop into the Carleton and see what you can learn about Clara Randall. She probably is known there by no other name. Find out how long she has been there and who has been visiting her."

"It is several months since we foiled her game against Cyrus Darling, and she evidently has thought it wise to use a fictitious name, her own having become somewhat notorious. Go ahead, Patsy, and let me hear from you."

Patsy Garvan needed no additional instructions. Half an hour later, after brief calls at three of the precinct stations, where he left such directions as the circumstances required, Patsy sprang from the touring car a few doors from the Lexington Avenue apartment house in which Clara Randall was said to have been quartered.

Entering in disguise, Patsy confided his identity and mission to the office clerk, who hurriedly responded to his inquiries after Nick Carter's name had been mentioned.

As Nick had predicted, however, Clara Randall had vacated her apartments one week before, and her whereabouts was not known.

"How long has she been living here?" Patsy inquired.

"Nearly four months."

"Alone?"

"Save when she had visitors," smiled the clerk significantly.

"Give it to me straight," said Patsy impressively. "Who has been calling on her?"

"Only two persons, a man and a woman, whom I have specially noticed," said the clerk. "The man's name is Jack Conroy, or that's the only name by which we know him. He has been very friendly with her. I don't know where he lives, however, nor anything more about him."

"You know how he looks," said Patsy, a bit dryly. "Describe him."

"Oh, he's a man of forty, a well-built chap, with dark hair and eyes and a short, pointed beard. He wears glasses and dresses fashionably, barring one feature that seems to hit his fancy."

"What is that?"

"He nearly always wears a figured vest."

"That's worth knowing," said Patsy. "Is that all you can tell me about him?"

"The whole business, Garvan, on my word."

"The woman left no address for her mail?"

"None. She said there would be no mail for her."

"Who was the other visitor, the woman you have mentioned? Do you know anything about her?"

"Only what I have seen," replied the clerk. "She has stopped here frequently in an automobile, evidently her own car, and always with the same chauffeur. He's a stocky chap in the twenties, smooth shaved and of light complexion. The woman is about thirty, or a little older. She dresses in style. She is about medium height and quite slender, with thin features and sort of brick-colored hair."

Patsy's eyes dilated. He had obtained a perfect description of the woman he was seeking, of Margaret Hanson, so called.

"You don't know her name?" he said inquiringly.

"No."

"Have you ever seen a red-headed boy with her?"

"No."

"Or noticed the number of her car?"

"Yes, by Jove, I have noticed that," said the clerk quickly. "It is 44120, New York. I'm almost sure of it."

"Good on your head," said Patsy. "That will help some, all right."

"Glad of it. Sorry I cannot do more for you."

"You can do a trifle more—keep all this to yourself," said Patsy, with a smile.

"You can bank on that, Garvan," nodded the clerk. "So long!"

Patsy already had turned from the desk and was hurry-

ing out of the house. Ten minutes later he entered a public garage, where, in a New York license book, he found that the car bearing the number mentioned was owned by Andrew J. Duffy, No. — Amsterdam Avenue, New York City.

"Gee whiz, Danny, that's going some," Patsy declared triumphantly, when he returned to the waiting car.

"Going some is right, Patsy, for fair," Danny Maloney readily agreed. "It's going to beat the band. Where next?"

"Hike me out to Amsterdam Avenue, and drop me a block from Duffy's house," Patsy directed, with increasing zest. "I'm to see what more I can learn."

"Have you put the chief wise?"

"You bet! I phoned him from the garage."

"Are you to make any arrests?"

"Not yet," said Patsy. "We must first make sure of finding the Madden kid. Kate Crandall is tricky, in spite of the fact that we have picked up her trail so quickly. She could not figure, you know, upon Nick's hearing and recognizing her voice when she telephoned to Madden, or supposed she was doing so. The chief played dead lucky in that, for it put him wise at once when Clara Randall's name and conduct were stated. She knows where Amy Madden is, all right, but the kid may not be in the Duffy house, possibly not within miles of it. We must plan to clinch the whole business before arresting any one, or we might make a bad mess of it."

"Sure thing," said Danny. "I see the point."

Twenty minutes served to land Patsy at his destination. He sprang from the car a block south of the Duffy place, still in disguise, and then directed Danny to return home with the car.

"I have no further use for it, and the chief may need it," he added, lingering for a moment. "I'm to be guided by what I discover."

Sauntering into a corner grocery store near which they had stopped, Patsy inquired where Duffy lived, merely to pave the way for further questions. He then learned, without incurring suspicion that Duffy was a dabbler in stocks, that he had no other business, that he had a wife and one son, Margaret and Jimmie, the latter a lad of ten years, also that the youngster had fiery-red hair.

"The danger hue. He's in the peril zone, all right," thought Patsy, sauntering out. "This is good enough for me. I'll now find out who is in the Duffy house, if possible, and then I'll phone the chief another pointer."

Instead of approaching it from in front, however, Patsy walked round the square and viewed the rear of the dwelling.

It proved to be an attractive wooden house on a corner lot, somewhat back from the avenue and with a driveway entrance from the side street, leading to a stone garage and a cement yard in front of it. The garage door was open and the car gone.

"Gee! that looks a bit bad," thought Patsy. "Windows all down and some of the shutters closed. No one at home but the cook, perhaps, and she is in the soup. No, by gracious, I'm wrong. There's a woman heading for the front door."

Glancing furtively through one of the side windows while he passed, Patsy caught sight of her skirts fluttering through the main hall. He timed his steps so as to

pause at the corner of the house just as the woman emerged from the front door.

It was the woman he was seeking—Kate Crandall.

Closely following her came the woman with auburn tresses, tightly grasping the hand of a red-headed, freckled lad, then more neatly clad than Lucy Sloan had described, as was the woman herself. All three were clad for the street, in fact, and evidently were departing on an important mission.

As quick as a flash, the instant he caught sight of them, Patsy crouched back of a vine-covered trellis near the corner of the house. He could see them plainly through the drooping foliage, which effectively hid himself, nevertheless, and a single glance convinced him that he had found one retreat, at least, of the much-desired quarry.

"Duffy's wife—Margaret Duffy, instead of Margaret Hanson," he said to himself. "Little Jimmie Duffy, too, who made the abduction trick possible. They have entered him young on the criminal-trotting circuit, but I'll nip him in the first heat and backtrack him. H'm, what now?"

Kate Crandall had stopped short upon reaching the front gate. Through the meshes of her dainty veil Patsy could see the gleam and glitter of her intense black eyes, and the peculiar pallor of her clear, velvety complexion. She spoke when turning, saying a bit sharply:

"You do what I have told you, Maggie, and you'll make no mistake. We have framed up this job too perfectly for any slip-up to occur. You go out there with the kid and wait until we come. Gleason will take us out after the preliminaries are arranged. That done, we shall not be long in landing the coin. I know, Maggie; you can bet on that."

"Well, I'm banking on your judgment, Kate, though I'm a bit skeery," Maggie Duffy vouchsafed. "I'll take Jimmie along, all the same, and wait until you come."

"We'll show up soon after dark," Kate assured her. "I must be off, now, to phone to Conroy. He'll be in the air by this time. I'm to join him later and go out with them in the car."

"I know about that, Kate."

"Get a move on, then, and look after the goods. There is nothing to fear, so don't lose your sand. We'll win out a mansion in Easy Street, Maggie, take my word for it."

Kate Crandall turned with the last and walked rapidly away.

Maggie Duffy hurried the red-headed youngster away in the opposite direction.

Patsy Garvan paused only briefly to determine what he would do.

"Gleason must be Duffy's chauffeur," he quickly reasoned. "He is going to take this bunch of blacklegs somewhere in an automobile. I might find it impossible to follow them. I'd better trail the Duffy woman, then, since their destination is the same. Yes, by Jove, it's Maggie Duffy for mine!"

Patsy broke cover with the last. He had no time to telephone to Nick, but he reasoned that he would do so later. He stole out of the yard, crouching to avoid observation, and then started in close pursuit of Maggie Duffy and her youthful Rufus.

They were heading for the nearest subway station.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN IN A FIGURED VEST.

It was after twelve o'clock when Nick received from Patsy Garvan, the telephone communication informing him what his assistant had learned up to the time he visited the garage, as stated, and this soon was followed by the return of Danny with additional information concerning Patsy's doings and designs.

"We will wait for his next report, or a communication from David Mack," Nick said simply.

Chick gazed at him for several moments, but his inquiring look brought no response from the detective.

Nick Carter had, in fact, been unusually absorbed during the long period of waiting. He had been sitting at his desk, gazing vacantly at it, with his brows knit and his mind concentrated upon the case engaging him, weighing all of the circumstances and seeking, as only Nick Carter's mind could seek, for something under the surface.

Half an hour brought no further report from Patsy, but it brought the expected communication from the banker.

Nick seized the telephone the instant the bell began to ring.

"Hello!" he called.

The answer came quickly:

"This is Mack talking. Is that you, Nick?"

"Yes."

"I am talking from my private office. I have heard from Redlaw."

"Tell me. Come on with it."

"I am directed to go out Westchester way at six o'clock this evening, alone in my runabout, and to follow the New Rochelle road till I am stopped by a man wearing a figured vest and carrying a red silk handkerchief in his hand. That's all. Not another word was said. What shall I do?"

"Do what he has directed," said Nick promptly.

"And follow your instructions of this morning?"

"To the letter."

"I will. Have you any to add?"

"No. I shall wait for your next report."

"Very good. You shall receive it as soon as possible." Mack assured him. "I'm game, mind you, for whatever the case requires."

"You are well chosen, then, for this work," Nick replied. "Between us, I think we can turn the trick."

"Me, too! So long."

"Good-by and good luck."

Nick hung up the receiver.

"By Jove, that dovetails well with Patsy's report," Chick declared, after Nick had told him of Mack's statements. "The man with a figured vest must be the same Jack Conroy mentioned by Patsy, and the intimate friend of Kate Crandall. Both evidently are in this job, including Duffy's wife and son, and very likely Duffy himself. What do you think?"

Nick Carter's reply astonished his chief assistant, even, for it was entirely unexpected.

"I'm hit with a new idea," said Nick, swinging round in his swivel chair. "Pull up here. I'll tell you with very few words what I think, Chick, and what you now must do."

Chick drew up his chair and listened.

What Nick Carter told him and required of him will appear in what occurred a little later.

At three o'clock that afternoon, alone, and carefully disguised, Nick Carter arrived in the neighborhood of the Duffy residence, where he began a stealthy search for Patsy Garvan. He failed to find him, of course, and soon he noticed that the house appeared to be deserted. There was no sign of life through any of the windows, and the door of the garage was closed.

"The birds must have flown," Nick reasoned, pausing a short distance from the house. "Patsy must have found them here and they must have made an immediate move of some kind, or he would have telephoned to me again. He is trailing them and found no opportunity to communicate with me. If I am right, by Jove, I may be able to clinch my suspicion concerning the Redlaw letter, if it was written in this house. I'll secure that evidence, at least, if possible."

Nick had sauntered around to the front of the house while thus sizing up the situation. The conclusion at which he had arrived was a perfectly natural one, and he mounted the steps and rang the bell, feeling quite sure that the summons would not be answered, and that he then could admit himself with a skeleton key and secretly search the house.

Somewhat to his surprise, however, the summons was immediately answered. He heard quick footsteps in the hall. The door was opened boldly, as boldly as if no occupant of the house had any occasion for caution, or fear of a visitor, and Kate Crandall herself appeared on the threshold.

The disguised face of the detective evinced no surprise. He accepted the situation as he found it. He bowed politely and said, with inquiring intonation:

"I am looking for Miss Clara Randall, who was recently employed in the banking house of Madden, Mellen & Mack. I was told that she might be found here. Was I rightly informed?"

Kate Crandall bowed and smiled. There was not a sign of distrust in her dark eyes. One would have said that she had not the slightest cause for fear, though Nick knew very well how audacious a bluff she was capable of undertaking. She had removed her street costume and was clad in a gray house gown of clinging woolen material that served to accentuate the graceful lines of her fine figure.

"Yes, sir, you were rightly informed," she replied. "I am Clara Randall."

"My name is Henderson Black," said Nick. "I am fortunate in finding you. Can you spare me a few minutes of your time?"

"For what, Mr. Black?" Kate questioned, eying him a bit more sharply.

"I have a business proposition to make you," Nick suavely explained. "I am in need of an expert stenographer for very important work. Don't say that you will not consider it, please, before having heard my offer. May I come in and explain? I will detain you only a short time."

"My time is not worth very much just now, Mr. Black," Kate said, with a laugh. "I was nearly asleep over a dull novel when you rang. Yes, I will hear what you have to say, though I hardly think I care to take on any very arduous work. Come into the library."

She drew back for him to enter, then conducted him

to an attractively-furnished room. An open book was lying on the table. Near by was a large armchair with a fancy silk pillow on the back of it, bearing an indentation where her head had been resting. These seemed to confirm her statements.

An open desk stood near one of the walls. The first article on it to catch the detective's eye was a large pad of plain paper, remarkably like that on which was written the Redlaw letter.

Nick instantly noticed all of these things, however, and his ears were alert to detect a sound from any other part of the house. None could be heard. He apparently had found the woman alone. He remarked casually, nevertheless, while he took a chair near the table:

"Are we likely to be overheard? My business relates to private political matters, Miss Randall, and what I tell you must go no further."

"There is no one to overhear you," said Kate, tossing aside the silk pillow and resuming her seat. "Mrs. Duffy, who lives here, has gone out of town with her son, and her husband never comes home before evening."

"Ah, very good," said Nick.

"As far as I am concerned," Kate added; "I will not repeat anything you confide to me. You may speak freely."

"I intend doing so," Nick replied, with more sinister intonation. "To begin with, however, I wish to know something about yourself."

"About me?"

"Yes, and about the—Needy Nine," Nick pointedly added.

Kate Crandall heard him with hardly a change of countenance. There was no apprehensive start, no unmistakable betrayal of how hard she was hit by his ominous words.

Though he thoroughly despised her, Nick could not but admire the nerve of this woman. He could detect only a quick dilation of her searching black eyes and a sudden deeper paleness in her cheeks. These were the only signs of her secret perturbation, and her voice, when she replied, was as steady as his.

"The Needy Nine?" she said inquiringly.

"Yes, the Needy Nine," Nick repeated.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Black."

"You don't?"

"Surely not. You are talking Greek to me," Kate declared. "I never heard of any Needy Nine."

"Nor of a man named Ralph Redlaw?"

"No, never."

"Well, well, I must be mistaken, then."

"You certainly are, sir, if you think I know anything about such persons. I am all in the dark as to your meaning."

"Possibly, Miss Crandall."

"Randall, sir."

"I said Crandall—and that is your name," Nick insisted. "Furthermore, since I am not inclined to mince matters, I will inform you that my name is not Henderson Black. You will readily remember it, I think, if I remove these slight adornments."

Nick deftly removed his disguise with the last and tossed it upon the table.

Kate Crandall shrank slightly, with brows knitting to a quick frown over her darkly glowing eyes. Her pallid face took on a look of scorn, of bitter hatred, but she replied, without stirring from her chair:

"Oh, it is you, Nick Carter, is it?"

"I thought you would remember me," said Nick dryly. "It is some little time since we met."

"Not nearly as long as I would have wished," snapped the woman. "I have no love for you, Carter, and well you know it. What's the meaning of this masquerade, anyway? Are you out again to make trouble for me? Haven't you done enough before?"

"All the troubles you have had, Miss Crandall, you made for yourself," Nick retorted. "As for masquerading, why have you been posing under a fictitious name here and while in the employ of Madden, Mellen & Mack?"

"Because you made my own name notorious," Kate informed him, with bitter asperity. "I could not get employment under my own name. A woman must live decently—though infernal meddlers like you make it next to impossible. What do you want here, anyway?"

"You know what I want," Nick said, more sternly. "I want to know what you and your confederates have done with John Madden's little daughter, Amy Madden."

"Done with her? I don't get you," Kate declared. "What do you mean by—done with her?"

"You know what I mean. You abducted her."

"Abducted nothing!" snapped Kate. "I don't know what you are talking about. If you are out to frame me up in a job of that kind, Carter, you have bit off more than you can chew. I can prove—"

"Disprove is what you will have to do," Nick curtly interrupted.

"What do you mean?" scowled Kate. "Come across plainly."

"I'll make it plain enough to you," Nick retorted. "I happened to see the woman who pretended to faint in Central Park yesterday afternoon. I remained with the nurse after we found that the Madden girl had been stolen. I went with her to the Madden residence, and I was there when one of the abductors talked by telephone with John Madden—or thought she did."

"Thought she did!" echoed Kate involuntarily.

"Exactly," Nick nodded. "But she did not talk with John Madden. She talked with me—and I recognized her voice. It was your voice, Kate Crandall."

"Rats! Nonsense! You are talking through your hat," Kate cried, with inelegant defiance, though her cheeks were ghastly and her thin, cruel lips as gray as ashes.

"Oh, no, I am not," Nick insisted. "I heard—"

"You heard nothing of the kind," Kate broke forth angrily. "I was not near Central Park yesterday afternoon. I can prove an alibi. Recognized my voice, indeed! I can refute any such evidence as that, Carter, and you can bet your boots on it. You're not going to frame me up in this way, take my word for it."

"Your word, Kate, isn't worth the breath that utters it," Nick replied.

"That's only your opinion," she snapped back at him.

"I expected you to deny everything in connection with this job, but I am gradually weaving the net around you," Nick added. "You will also deny, of course, that you know anything about this letter."

He drew it from his pocket while speaking and spread it open for her to look at—the pencil-printed Redlaw letter.

Kate Crandall gazed at it for a moment with flaming eyes, then tossed her head and burst out laughing—a

bitter, scornful, defiant laugh, so utterly void of mirth that it grated harshly on Nick's ears.

"What is it?" she demanded. "Something that you have cooked up, Carter, with a view to putting me into the soup. I don't want to read it. I care nothing about it, know nothing about it, and you may do what you like with it and go to the devil!"

"You never saw it before, did you?"

"No, never."

"We'll see about that. Keep your seat, Kate, and keep your hands on your lap, where I can see them," Nick sternly commanded. "If you move either of them, I'll put you in irons."

"Irons! What do you mean by—"

"I mean what I say," Nick sharply interrupted. "Obey me, or you'll pay the price."

"But—"

"There aren't any buts. I think I can verify my assertion. I came here for that purpose and many others equally important. You keep quiet."

Nick reached over to the desk while speaking and took from it the pad of paper mentioned.

With an eye on Kate Crandall all the while, he compared the size of the printed sheet with the pad. It corresponded exactly.

From a little tin box brought from his business office, Nick then sprinkled the quantity of dry black dust over the face of the pad, which he then held at a slight angle and blew the dust from the surface.

Most of it was dispersed with a single breath. There remained, in fact, only the particles that occupied the faint indentations, scarcely perceptible before, caused by the pressure of a pencil through the printed sheet that had been removed from the pad—lines and letters which the black dust now brought out quite vividly.

The face of the pad, in fact, now presented quite a legible likeness of the Redlaw letter—so like it that further denial was out of the question.

Nick turned the pad and displayed it to the watching woman.

"What say you now?" he asked sternly. "Out with it! What have you to say?"

"If it's all the same to you, Carter, I'll do the saying at this stage of the game."

The last did not come from Kate Crandall, who looked as if turned to stone by the detective's utterly irrefutable discovery.

The interruption came, instead, from a man who flung aside a portière masking a doorway, and quickly entered the room—a well-built, dark-featured man, wearing glasses and a short, pointed beard.

He also wore, as Nick was quick to notice—a figured vest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AMBUSH.

"The man with a figured vest, Jack Conroy, mentioned by Patsy."

This thought passed like a flash through Nick Carter's mind when the intruder stepped into the room. Instantly, too, Nick suspected trickery, and his right hand went instinctively toward his hip pocket.

On the instant, however, the intruder covered him with a revolver.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Don't you attempt to pull a gun, Carter, or there'll be nothing left but the clean-up. I've got the drop on you."

"So I now observe," Nick put in dryly.

"But not because I thought it specially necessary, mind you, beyond preventing you from putting something over on me, as you have threatened my friend here," Conroy quickly added. "You sit quiet and keep your hands in sight, as you told her, and there'll be no bloodshed. This business can be settled without using guns—and settled right."

"Without using guns, eh?" said Nick, sharply eying him.

"That's what."

"And is that why you are so ready with one?"

"I told you why, Carter, and it goes. I'm no gunman, but I don't propose to let you give me the worst of it, nor this young lady. There will be no more trouble unless you reach for a weapon. If you do—well, I'll take mighty good care that mine barks first."

"We'll let it go at that, then," said Nick, settling back in his chair. "Who are you and how do you figure in this business? Kate Crandall said she was alone here."

"So I did, Carter, and supposed—"

"You keep quiet, Kate, and let me do the talking with this detective," Conroy commanded, interrupting her when she pulled herself together and started to explain. "He has made a mistake, a big blunder, and I'm going to set him right—providing he is not too pig-headed to see things right."

Conroy coolly sat down while speaking. He took a chair at the table, one directly opposite that occupied by the detective, and he then laid his revolver directly in front of him on the table, where it could be easily reached.

"Now, Carter, we'll discuss this business man fashion," he said curtly. "I'll not touch the gun unless you reach for yours."

"Very well," said Nick indifferently. "But you have not answered my questions."

"What questions?"

"Who are you and how do you figure in this business?" Nick repeated. "Why were you concealed in that room?"

"That isn't a room," said Conroy, with a jerk of his thumb toward the door through which he had entered. "That door leads into the rear hall and out to the kitchen."

"Why were you concealed there, then?"

"I wasn't concealed there. I only happened to be there," Conroy coolly asserted. "Kate Crandall did not know I was in the house. Nor was I, in fact, until after you had entered."

"Well?"

"I heard your voices when I came through the rear yard from the side street. Not knowing yours and being a bit jealous of Kate, I entered noiselessly and listened in the rear hall. That's all there was to it," added Conroy. "I heard most that you have said, Carter, and you're dead wrong."

"You really think so, do you?"

"I know so, Carter."

"Dead wrong in what respect?" questioned Nick tentatively.

"In suspecting Kate Crandall of—"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted. "Who are you, anyway?"

The question brought a sharper gleam into the eyes back of the gold-bowed glasses, but it waned almost instantly, for the detective's tone and scrutiny evinced no definite suspicion.

"My name is Jack Conroy."

"Jack Conroy, eh?"

"That's what."

"Where do you live? How could you enter this house?"

"I board here, have boarded here for weeks," Conroy promptly asserted. "That's why I could enter. I have a key to both doors."

"That's true, Mr. Carter, on my word," Kate Crandall put in.

"I already have told you what I think your word is worth," said Nick, with a quick glance at her.

"But you are wrong, Carter, dead wrong," Conroy repeated. "I know what I am talking about, and I'm going to prove it to you."

"That's up to you, then," said Nick. "I'm always open to conviction. I'm willing to listen."

"That's as it should be," Conroy replied. "As I understand it, from what you two have been saying, some girl or child has recently been abducted."

"Exactly," said Nick, not without an object in prolonging this conversation.

"Yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"About four o'clock."

"Well, I was with Kate Crandall in a moving-picture house at that hour, so I know she could have had no hand in an abduction," Conroy forcibly asserted. "I know also that you may not believe that, since I am her intimate friend, and it's on another point that I'm going to set you right."

"What point is that?"

"That letter," said Conroy, pointing to it. "I don't know what it contains, but I heard what you said about it and saw what you did to the pad. You evidently suspect that the letter was written in this house. So it was, of course, in view of what you have discovered. But Kate Crandall did not write it."

"How do you know that?" questioned Nick.

"Because I know who did write it."

"Who?"

"The man who lives here and owns the place—Andy Duffy," said Conroy emphatically.

"How do you know he wrote it?" Nick asked, with steadfast scrutiny.

"Because I saw him at work on it three or four evenings ago," said Conroy. "I was reading, and he was seated at his desk. I wondered what he was doing, he was at work so long and kept tearing up sheets of paper."

"Why didn't you inquire?"

"It was none of my business. I picked out several pieces of the paper from the wastebasket, nevertheless, after he had quit and gone to bed. I found only some printed letters on them, instead of written, but I could make nothing out of what little I found. I did not suppose, of course, that he was engaged in anything crooked."

Conroy told this story glibly and with an air of genuine veracity.

"There, what say you to that, Carter?" Kate Crandall demanded, with her nerve and courage reviving. "You have been barking up the wrong tree. You admit that you were wrong now, I guess."

Nick did not trouble himself to assert that Conroy's statements were false. Pretending to be impressed by them, on the contrary, and with no apparent interest in the weapon lying on the table, Nick had been keeping a constant eye on the man, waiting only to catch him with his attention so diverted from the revolver that it could not be instantly seized, if he should venture a sudden aggressive move.

Instead of replying to the woman's taunting remark, Nick continued his talk with the man.

"You suspected nothing crooked, eh?"

"Certainly not," said Conroy, shaking his head. "But I now know, of course, that he must have been framing up this abduction."

"Is that all you know about it?"

"Not by a long chalk!"

"What do you mean? What else do you know?"

"I can tell you who are with Duffy in the job."

"His confederates?"

"Surest thing you know."

"Why are you so sure of it?"

"Because I now recall certain circumstances that did not, at the time of their occurrence, impress me as being suspicious," Conroy explained. "They now have a very different look."

"What circumstances, Mr. Conroy?" Nick inquired.

"To begin with," Conroy proceeded, "Duffy has been visited several times during the past month by a fellow named Kennedy. They have held private discussions out in the garage. I knew they were private, all right, for both made it a point to get rid of me whenever I showed up."

"I see. What more?"

"Three days ago I saw both of them talking privately with Duffy's wife, Maggie, and I wondered at the expression on her face," Conroy continued. "I now know they must have been talking about this abduction, and I afterward saw Maggie giving her red-headed boy some very careful instructions. He's a cute kid, Carter, and he also may have figured in the job."

"Quite likely," Nick allowed.

"That's how I now size it up, Carter, and it's a hundred to one that Kennedy and Duffy, with Maggie Duffy and possibly the kid, are the ones who stole the missing child. But Kate was not in the job, Carter, I'll swear to that," Conroy forcibly insisted. "I know all about her, mind you, and that she has been a little off color in the past; but she certainly had no hand in this job."

"That's true, Carter, on the level," Kate glibly asserted.

Nick ignored her again, but not the man, for an instant. Addressing him, he inquired:

"Is there anything more you can tell me?"

"You bet there is," Conroy quickly replied. "I think I can put you on the road to recover the child."

"How so?"

"Because I know that Duffy and his wife agreed to join Kennedy in a certain house to-night, and that's where the woman has gone with her sorrel-haired youngster."

"Where is the house?"

"Out Westchester way," said Conroy; then, more earnestly: "I know just where it is located. Duffy's car is in the garage here and I can run it. If you want to go out there to nail this bunch and get the stolen child, I'll take you out there and help you round them up. I'll do this just to prove to you, Carter, that Kate had no hand in it."

"Good for you!" Kate Crandall exclaimed. "That ought to be fair enough for any meddlesome detective."

"As foul, instead, as the jade herself," was the thought that passed through Nick Carter's mind.

That he rightly interpreted this offer; that he knew Conroy designed only to lure him to the house mentioned, in order to place him at a greater disadvantage, if not even to kill him outright, if it could be more safely done,—that Nick Carter knew all this and much more appeared in what speedily followed.

"Yes, it's a fair offer, Conroy," said he, pretending to be impressed with it. "You know where the house is located, you say?"

"I do," Conroy nodded. "I can take you straight to it."

"Does Kennedy live there?"

"He is employed there. He is the only person living there just now. He is employed as a caretaker and chauffeur by the man who owns the place."

"Do you know the man?"

"Sure I know him."

"Who is he?"

"He's the junior partner of a banking house, the one for which Kate worked for a time," Conroy explained. "His name is David Mack. He's a widower, and he has not occupied the Westchester house since his wife died. That was only a year ago. He keeps Kennedy there, however, and goes out occasionally. Kennedy probably is taking the risk of hiding the stolen child in the vacant house."

"By Jove, that might be true," said Nick. "Have you any idea, Conroy, that Mack himself is in this job?"

"No, no, he isn't in it," Conroy quickly protested. "He would have no hand in such business. David Mack is strictly on the square. Kennedy is only his hired man, you know, and is alone out there most of the time."

"I see."

"If you will go out there with me, Carter—"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted. "You said you picked some of Duffy's torn papers from the wastebasket and found printing on them. Have a look at this letter. Were the printed letters that you found like these, or similar?"

Nick leaned forward with the last and tossed the Redlaw letter upon the table.

Conroy instantly picked it up, suspecting nothing.

It was the opportunity for which Nick had been paving the way.

He seized a drooping fold of the tablecloth, then gave it a jerk that instantly whisked the cloth from the table, carrying with it books, papers, magazines, and Jack Conroy's revolver, scattering all of them over the floor.

Then, with a lightninglike move, Nick's hand shot across the table and seized the beard of the startled man.

Conroy shrank back with a terrible yell. His beard, his glasses, a neatly fitted wig—all were torn off by the detective's irresistible hand, revealing the ghastly, horrified, rage-distorted face of—David Mack.

"Aha! I thought so," Nick shouted, leaping to his feet and reaching for his revolver. "You are the chief abductor, Mack, after all."

Nick did not, however, succeed in drawing his weapon nor in making the arrests he had in view. The entire sensational episode transpired in the quarter part of a second.

The yell scarce had left David Mack's lips, when, through a doorway back of the detective, two men leaped with uplifted bludgeons and fell upon Nick from behind, just as he was springing to his feet.

One of them was a brawny, powerful man with red hair—Andy Duffy himself.

The other was Gleason, his chauffeur, mentioned in Patsy's hearing by Kate Crandall.

All three men were with the woman in the house when Nick rang the bell, and their immediate suspicions had led to what followed.

Nick heard their steps behind him even while he was speaking, and he sprang to one side to avoid a blow—but the move was an instant tardy.

A blackjack in Duffy's hand fell squarely on the side of Nick's head. The terrific blow staggered him. Another from Gleason followed it. The third came from his more brawny assailant. All fell in the hundredth part of a second.

Nick felt his knees buckle under him. The room went whirling around like a top. The beginning and end were more quick than one could imagine.

Vengeful shouts from David Mack, exultant cries from Kate Crandall, the hoarse oaths and imprecations of his merciless assailants—all suddenly sounded faint and far away, and the light through the lace-draped windows turned to inky darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE SURFACE.

It was not a sudden inspirational suspicion, no inexplicable intuitive conviction, that had caused Nick Carter to snatch a disguise from the face of Jack Conroy, so called, and unmask the treacherous scoundrel chiefly responsible for the abduction of Amy Madden.

Nick Carter had dug out this possibility from under the superficial facts and circumstances before leaving his business office that afternoon. He had asked himself numerous pertinent questions leading up to it.

Why had Kate Crandall, surely one of the abductors, lately left her position with Madden, Mellen & Mack? What reason could she have had for giving up a remunerative situation?"

Why did it really happen that, instead of dealing directly with the father of the stolen child, the abductors had selected to negotiate with his junior partner, David Mack? What was the true reason for that? Were there secret relations existing between these two, Kate Crandall and David Mack?

If so, and Nick recalled the downfall of Cyrus Darling, had Mack also lost his head for this handsome, fascinating, yet thoroughly unscrupulous woman? If so, again, might not he and her very intimate friend, Jack Conroy, be one and the same?

Going a step farther, might not David Mack have still other motives for the crime? Consider the size of the ransom demanded. Who so likely to demand half a

million for the restoration of a six-year-old child, as a banker accustomed to handling millions?

This was the process of reasoning, or part of it, that had started Nick in search of Patsy Garvan, to see what more he had learned and to give him additional instructions.

This was the new idea, moreover, that he had imparted to Chick Carter before leaving his office, as already stated, together with instructions to his chief assistant.

Resulting from all this, Chick Carter was doing some lively flying around while Nick was engaged as described.

Chick's first moves on the criminal chessboard were hurried visits to several banking and brokerage houses, where he finally obtained the information he was seeking—that a man named Jack Conroy dealt extensively with certain stock-market brokers, with whom he carried heavy margin accounts, and whose names the detective finally obtained.

Chick then visited these brokers one after another, and he learned that the said Jack Conroy was carrying margin accounts aggregating more than half a million dollars, so distributed that neither broker had felt any misgivings, though comparatively little was known about the man.

It was after four o'clock when Chick had gathered all of these facts, and he then made a bee line for the offices of Madden, Mellen & Mack. He found Madden and Mellen in the room in which Nick had conferred with them that morning, and Chick at once came down to business.

"Is Mr. Mack absent?" he inquired, after evasively informing Mr. Madden that no definite clews had been discovered, much to the banker's disappointment.

"Yes, he has gone for the day," said Mr. Mellen, replying

"He is to meet that infernal scoundrel, Redlaw, this evening," Mr. Madden bitterly added. "Nick has told you, of course, about the rascal's telephone communication to Mack?"

"I know all about that," Chick replied. "How long has Mr. Mack been gone?"

"Since two o'clock. The assistant cashier is handling his work."

"Mack is cashier for this firm, then, I take it."

"Yes."

"Is he a wealthy man, Mr. Madden?"

"No, not very," said Madden, while both bankers appeared to wonder at the question.

"Is he worth a million?" asked Chick carelessly.

"Nothing like it."

"Half a million?"

"No, nor half of that," said Mr. Mellen. "He has only a small interest in this firm. His wife, who died a year ago, was a terrible spendthrift. I doubt that Mack could raise a hundred thousand dollars, to say nothing of half a million. His place up in Westchester County may be worth twenty thousand."

"Does he live there?"

"Not since his wife died. He employs a man to care for the place, however, and goes out there occasionally. He lives in a suite in town."

"I see," said Chick, with eyes shining. "I suppose Mack acts as your treasurer, as well as cashier, doesn't he?"

"He has charge of all of our securities, of course, if

that is what you mean," said Mr. Madden. "But what of all this? What are you driving at, Mr. Carter?"

"I will tell you presently," Chick replied. "Are your clerks still at work in the outer office?"

"Yes, certainly."

"How often is your balance sheet made up and your securities examined and checked off?"

"Once a month," said Mellen, gazing.

"Does Mack attend to all that?"

"Yes, always."

"Where are the securities kept?"

"In a compartment in our vault," said Mellen. "Mack has one of the two keys. I carry the other."

"Call in one of your clerks, Mr. Madden," said Chick. "Let's have a look at your last balance sheet, and compare it with the securities now in your vault."

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Madden, aghast. "You don't suspect David Mack of embezzlement, do you?"

"Well, to be perfectly frank, that is precisely what I suspect," Chick declared, more forcibly.

"But—"

"Let's lose no time in speculating upon it, however, for time is valuable. We can quickly learn the truth. Have the balance sheet brought in, Mr. Madden, while you, Mr. Mellen, bring the securities from the vault. We can conduct these investigations quietly and without informing your clerks. That must be avoided for the present."

Chick Carter's instructions now were hurriedly followed. The result of the examination, moreover, fully confirmed his suspicions.

David Mack was found to be short in his accounts precisely—half a million dollars.

Numerous packages of securities, or supposed to contain them, tied up and sealed and labeled with Mack's own handwriting, contained only worthless papers and useless old documents.

David Mack was short precisely the amount of the demanded ransom.

"My Lord!" Mr. Madden groaned, when the full truth was learned. "My Lord, who could have believed it? Are disasters never to end? What on earth does this mean, Mr. Carter?"

Chick waved both dismayed bankers to their seats.

"What it means, gentlemen, may be very briefly stated," he now said gravely. "David Mack has been speculating heavily in an assumed character and under the name of Jack Conroy. He has margin accounts with half a score of brokers, and is involved more than half a million dollars, with absolutely no prospect of recovery in the present declining market."

"Recovery! Good heavens, I should say not!" cried Mellen, throwing up his hands.

"Mack has been secretly using your securities, gentlemen, to carry these numerous accounts," Chick continued. "He evidently realized lately that his situation was a hopeless one. To pull himself out of the hole and square himself here, therefore, he has resorted to another crime."

"You mean—"

"I mean, gentlemen, that David Mack conspired with your stenographer and other confederates to abduct the Madden child—knowing very well that you, Mr. Madden, would pay even half a million dollars for her safe return."

"Good heavens!"

John Madden sank back in his chair as if completely nonplused.

"That is the story in a nutshell, gentlemen, and that is why David Mack was appointed to conduct negotiations with a fictitious Redlaw. Observe, Mr. Madden, how easy that would make it for him to take your money and restore your missing child."

Mellen banged the table with both fists, crying angrily:

"By Heaven, that scoundrel shall pay for this. I will have his life. I will—"

"On the contrary, Mr. Mellen, you will be wise and let the law inflict the penalty," Chick Carter interrupted. "Nick already is at work along these lines. We shall, I think, have Mack and all of his confederates in custody before midnight—and the stolen child safe in her own home."

"Heaven grant it!" cried Madden fervently.

"If the time should be longer, however, you must be patient," Chick quickly added. "If Mack should return before we have succeeded in rounding him up, you must have him arrested immediately, and allow him no communication with persons outside. I do not think that will occur, however, if my suspicions are correct. Now, Mr. Madden, give me precise directions for reaching Mack's house in Westchester."

"Is there where you expect to find my child?"

"I certainly do."

"By Heaven, then, I will go with you."

"And I, also," cried Mellen. "I want one crack at that miscreant."

Chick checked them with a gesture.

"On the contrary, gentlemen, you must do absolutely nothing in this matter," he firmly insisted.

"Nothing?"

"It is out of your line, gentlemen. It is one for men of my vocation to handle. An indiscreet step on your part might ruin all that we have accomplished. Be patient, I repeat, until we have finished our work."

Both bankers now saw the wisdom of his advice, and they readily yielded to it. Five minutes later, having obtained the directions he required, Chick left their office and hastened home.

Nick Carter had not returned.

No word had been received from Patsy Garvan.

It then was nearly six o'clock.

Chick rang for Danny Maloney and the touring car, then telephoned to police headquarters.

More than an hour later, just as the dusk of evening was deepening to darkness, Chick alighted from the car with two plain-clothes men in a rural road amid the wooded hills of Westchester County, and cautiously approached a fine old wooden residence half hidden among trees in the near distance.

The three detectives still were outside of the private grounds, when, emerging from some shrubbery flanking one side of the extensive estate, a quick, athletic figure hurried toward them.

"Great Scott!" Chick quietly exclaimed. "Is it you, Patsy?"

"You bet, Chick, and I'm mighty glad you have showed up," said Patsy expressively.

"Something doing, eh?"

"Surest thing you know."

"Where is Nick?"

"Well, I have a hunch, now, that he is in that house," said Patsy, pointing.

"David Mack's house."

"That is?"

"Surely. He is the man we want, the chief crook of the bunch."

Patsy looked puzzled. He did not then know what Nick Carter had dug from under the surface.

"Gee! that beats me," he muttered. Then, more hurriedly: "I followed Duffy's wife and boy out here, and have been watching ever since and waiting for darkness. Less than half an hour ago a big touring car came out, containing a veiled woman and three men. They now are in the house. One of them is Jack Conroy, I reckon, for he answers the description and wears a figured vest."

"Jack Conroy and David Mack are one and the same."

"The devil you say!"

"Devil is right, I guess," chuckled Chick. "What more? Why do you think Nick is in the house?"

"Because they stopped the car at the side door, that one under the porte-cochère, and the three men lugged in a big burden wrapped in the robes. It looked like the figure of a man, but I couldn't be sure of it. If—"

"There will be no ifs, Patsy, in about five minutes," Chick interrupted. "The darkness now will cover our approach. Come on, all hands! We'll find out why the milk is in the coconut—even if we have to break a nut or two."

CHAPTER IX.

THE DROP SHOT.

Chick Carter led the way across one side of the wooded estate, closely followed by Patsy and the two headquarters' detectives.

They moved noiselessly over the damp greensward, like shadows only a little darker than the darkness, and picked their way toward two lighted windows back of the porte-cochère. Though the curtains had been lowered, a thread of bright light under one of them told that a view of the room could easily be obtained.

Chick and Patsy crept near enough to peer in, and the scene that met their gaze was about what they expected.

The room was the library.

Seated in it was the entire gang of crooks—Mack, Duffy, Gleason, and Kennedy, with Duffy's wife and son, and Kate Crandall. All were divested of their outdoor garments. All wore expressions of grim exultation—the occasion for which was plainly manifest. They were gazing darkly at the only other occupant of the room.

Nick Carter sat bound securely to a large armchair in one corner. His face was pale and a bit drawn, but the light in his stern eyes told the nature of his thoughts.

Chick did not wait to hear what was being said. He saw a revolver on the table near Mack's hand. He drew Patsy back a little, then whispered:

"There is a conservatory back of the house, with an inner door leading into the library."

"I noticed it," murmured Patsy.

"I can get into the conservatory with Jenks and Gilman. The three of us can then force the inner door in a jiffy."

"Sure! Like breaking sticks."

"You remain here."

"Why here?"

"You saw the gun on the table?"

"You bet!"

"Mack is the only one who will venture anything desperate," Chick whispered. "He thinks Nick is the only one who is wise to this business. Vengeance, when he finds himself cornered, may impel him to snatch up the weapon and kill the chief."

"Gee! I get you."

"Have your revolver ready," Chick added. "If Mack makes any such move as that, give him a drop shot on the instant."

"Drop shot is right," muttered Patsy, scowling. "I'll drop him so he'll never rise again."

"That's all. We shall down that door within five minutes."

"Go ahead. I'll do my part."

Chick glided away in the darkness, followed by the two detectives.

Patsy crept to the window again, revolver in hand, where he crouched to gaze and listen.

David Mack was speaking.

"There now is nothing to it, Carter," he was snarling bitterly, no longer in disguise. "You have put me in a position that leaves me no alternative. I must wipe you out of existence."

Nick Carter sat gazing sternly from one to another.

"You put yourself in the position you are in, Mack," he coldly answered. "If you think you can remedy it by killing me—well, that's up to you."

"It's what he deserves," snapped Kate Crandall. "He's an infernal meddler. It will be the joy of my life to know that he is off the earth. You know what he has done for me, Dave."

"Yes, I know, Kate, all right."

"Give him all that's coming to him, then."

"It's the only chance for any of us," growled Duffy, scowling. "We must play the game to a finish, or throw up our hands."

"You'll throw up your hands, all right," thought Patsy, with eyes and ears alert.

"As for Kate Crandall—" Mack began.

"Oh, you are not the first man, Mack, who has been brought to the bad by this unscrupulous woman," Nick interrupted. "She will give you the worst of it, sooner or later, as she has done for others."

"Not worse than you'll get," cut in Kate, with vicious asperity. "Thank Heaven, I've got you where I want you, at last."

"Don't bank too heavily on that," Nick coolly advised.

"What do you mean by that, Carter?" Mack quickly demanded.

"Just what I say."

"Do you imply—"

"Only that my death, on which you seem inclined to bank, is not going to save you," Nick sternly interrupted. "I know all about the game you have been playing. You overleaped your mount, Mack, when you had yourself appointed to negotiate with a fictitious Redlaw. I know well enough that you are short in your accounts, and that

you have taken this criminal course to raise money with which to square yourself."

"You know too much," scowled the recreant banker.

"It is known also to my assistants," Nick pointedly added. "Your putting me away will not save you. You are booked for Sing Sing, one and all of you, as surely as—"

"You lie!" screamed Kate Crandall. "That's only a bluff, Dave, to avert the fate that threatens him. He's lying when he says—"

But her own vicious words were given the lie at that moment.

Like a bolt from an azure sky, came the sudden, violent crash of three men against the door leading into the conservatory, and with it the smash of woodwork and the rending of lock and hinges.

The door fell in upon the floor with a violence that seemed to shake the house, and over it Chick, Jenks, and Gilman came plunging, revolvers in hand.

Mingled with all this were the shrieks of Kate Crandall, screams from Maggie Duffy, the hoarse shouts of dismay from the cornered men—and a single ringing report from a revolver outside of the splintering window.

For David Mack, as Chick had anticipated, obeyed the first impulse of his recreant heart, that of vengeance. He leaped to his feet the instant the crash came, and snatched his revolver from the table, turning like a flash to fire at the helpless detective.

Patsy's revolver barked on the instant, however, and the bullet went true.

It was a drop shot, indeed.

For David Mack threw up his hands and without so much as a groan pitched headlong to the floor, shot through the brain. He died where he lay thirty seconds later.

In the meantime Chick and the two detectives from headquarters had covered the others, and, in spite of curses and imprecations, they were speedily put in irons.

The case, already so apparent to the reader, practically ended then and there, in so far as any difficult work for the detectives was concerned.

Amy Madden was found confined in a room on the second floor, and long before midnight, as Chick had predicted, she was restored to the arms of her overjoyed father. Her story confirmed Nick's theory of the abduction, which already has been stated.

The crooks were easily convicted in court a week later, and all were sentenced to the State's prison for several years. Kate Crandall pined in her confinement and died before her sentence expired.

Nick Carter and his assistants were handsomely rewarded by the grateful banker, even more handsomely than Nick was really willing to accept. He allowed, nevertheless, discussing it with Mr. John Madden, that it was better than having had to pay—Half a Million Ransom.

THE END.

"The Girl Kidnaper; or, Nick Carter's Up-to-date Clew," is the title of the story that you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 124, out January 23d. It deals with the doings of some unusual criminals, and the remarkably clever manner in which Nick Carter got the upper hand of them.

RUBY LIGHT.

By BURKE JENKINS.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 120 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER X.

"BUTTER FINGER."

Stroth started to lead me toward another door at the forward end of the stateroom; then he caught the interest in my eyes, now that I had opportunity to turn attention to the room itself.

"It's no Chinese puzzle to guess my hobby, is it?"

"Well, hardly!" I exclaimed, for there wasn't a square inch of wall space that wasn't actually papered with photographs of the oldest, most freakish type.

Every trick of overexposure, and underexposure, blending, "ghost prints," compositions, moonlight—every weird effect of which I had ever heard was there—and done in a wonderful knowledge of the art.

"Superb!" I exclaimed.

"Then you know the game," he said delightedly.

"I've done little camera work for years," said I, "but my memory tells me what splendid results these are."

"I thought we'd get along, Grey," he answered. "Something seemed to tell me so. Come on, then, and I'll show you where I love to be." And, once more, he approached the door.

"Just a minute," I interposed, as my eye caught sight of a five-by-seven print which fitted into the panel of a small locker door about breast-high. I never have been able to see how the photograph was taken. The subject was simple enough. It was Stroth himself, looking down, it seemed, into the very heart of a negative coming to life. It was as though the lens was situated in the developing tray itself, and that the dawning picture was looking out wonderingly at its creator. The setting was that of the dark room's somberness—a bottle or two of dull reflection, a glass graduate. But greatest of all was the deep hue of the ruby lamp as it brought out the eager tension of his features.

I have dwelt on that crane of the neck and stoop of the shoulders; it was there—intensified, unmistakable. The look in the eyes I cannot describe clearer than to say that they lived—actually lived and glowed on that bit of lifeless paper.

"Oh, that thing," said he carelessly. "Just yours truly at his hobby. But come, here we have the dark room itself."

And he swung open the door.

Such equipment I have never seen equaled, and I could feel the old glow of the camera crank stealing over me again.

The door which he closed behind us excluded the light entirely, and, with the click of a wall switch, Stroth flooded the small apartment with a soft ruddiness which I saw was effected by a cunningly devised scheme of lighting.

A sort of bowl containing red electric bulbs depended from the ceiling, which itself was tinted to the hue, and the resultant ability to distinguish everything one needed in an absolutely safe light was a joy.

"Pretty sweet, eh, Grey?" he said, at the exclamation of pleasure I didn't restrain.

"Great!" said I. "And aboard a vessel, at that!"

His brow clouded a second as he replied:

"And right there you've hit upon my greatest difficulty. Of course, right now, with booms broad off, and scarcely any sea, I can work to perfection. But heavy weather is apt to put me out of commission. I've tried every possible scheme to overcome the trouble—even to having a swinging table, but no go. But, oh, here!"

And he snapped over to another tone—a brighter one.

"I believe we've got time," he added, as he rummaged into the interior of a small cabinet, "and, strange as it may seem, it's the first time I ever tried the thing. It'll certainly interest you."

I said nothing in reply, but watched him closely as his nimble fingers, with the facility of long practice, flew from plate holder to tray, from bottle to graduate. And next moment we were standing side by side, craning over a negative coming to life.

"To my way of thinking," said he, as he gently rocked the fluid across the dull face of the plate, "you can't beat the old tray development; I'll have none of that tank stuff in mine."

"I agree with you heartily there," I replied. "But what is this, anyway?"

The lines on the negative were beginning to take a significance distinctly reminiscent.

Stroth chuckled. "My first snapshot by searchlight looks as if it were going to be a success."

"And do you mean to say," I cried, "that last night—"

"Too good a chance to lose," said he, with continued mirth. "And I got on deck just 'about the right minute, didn't I?" Whereupon he withdrew the plate from its bath, and held it up between me and the red glow of the developing lamp.

And there, unmistakable, I saw depicted the punt, the hydroplane shunting from its course, Pawlinson's arms not yet lowered from the hurl he had given me, and I myself just striking the water, a bit of spray fouling a line or two.

"Remarkable!" said I, not without a touch of wrath, for the picture brought back the moment.

"It'll be one of my best!" cried Stroth enthusiastically, "and, right this minute, I wouldn't take fifty dollars for it. It's great!"

He stepped a bit to one side, and bathed the plate, preparatory to the "fixing bath." But just as he slipped the negative into the "hypo" there came a cheery, but decided, rapping at the dark-room door.

"Dad, oh, daddy!" came through the panel, in a voice of bell-like, girlish clearness.

With a bound almost feline, Stroth sprang forward, whispering sharply:

"I forgot the lock!"

But he didn't reach the door in time, for she had tried the knob, concluded it was right enough to enter. And a hasty reflection assured me that the picture wouldn't suffer, anyway, now that it had reached the fixing tray.

The girl, her eyes getting accustomed to the lesser light, caught sight of me, and started; then whirled suddenly upon her father.

"Then we lost, dad?"

"Well, scarcely, Stella!" Stroth put a lightness to his answer, which thinly veiled decided uneasiness. "We

won, and won well. So much so, in fact, that Mr. Grey here is to be our guest for the trip. You see, I just thought it would be a nice thing to kidnap him for company."

Even in the darkness surrounding us, I could feel his eyes drilling at me, as if defying me to contradict by word or manner.

Silence was my only course, and the girl quickly lifted the suspense by recognizing the introduction. She even stepped forward, and shook my hand, as she said:

"It was great fun, wasn't it, Mr. Grey? And I was certainly put out when dad made me stick to my stateroom last night, when we were getting under way."

Here Stroth interrupted:

"You know you were all tired out, dear, and I thought it best that you should—"

"Oh, I knew enough to realize that a captain of a ship has the right of life and death over all aboard," she bantered, taking me along with her infectious laughter, "and I just obeyed."

Stroth smiled whimsically as he retorted:

"I certainly am boss when you're around, honey. There can be no denying that; I'm just positively tyrannical."

She greeted this with a delightful hilarity, that fully riveted any verdict of the love between this father and daughter.

But for all his excellent acting, I could read considerable perturbation in Stroth.

"Well, sure enough, dad, I didn't really mean to interrupt you, but Saki told me that dinner would be ready in about five minutes, and I just—"

That instant she caught sight of the plate in the tray, and made a step toward it, adding:

"I certainly hope I didn't spoil—"

But, before she could get a fair look, Stroth sprang past her, and caught up the tray.

"No, no, Stella," said he, "you didn't spoil anything. It'll be all right. You see, I—"

He kept whirling the solution across the face of the plate.

"Oh, daddy, let me see!" cried the girl ingenuously, and she checked his arm in its gyration.

For one brief moment I saw mingled annoyance and consternation flash over his features. Then they cleared to a decision, and the next second I witnessed its carrying out.

"Wait!" he exclaimed suddenly, as she made as if to peer into the tray itself. "You might get your dress or hands stained. Come now, I'll take the plate out itself. It's about fixed, anyway."

He reached his forefinger into the hypo in a measured groping for the edge of the glass, but his eye held me full as he withdrew it.

"Here, now girlie," and he lifted it clear of the liquid.

She stuck her little head out prettily, her arms back of her, against possible drip.

But she saw nothing, for the negative fell to the floor, where it was shattered to a thousand pieces!

"Oh, oh, daddy!" she cried, in genuine grief.

"Why, it's nothing at all, honey," said he. "I was just showing Mr. Grey my method of developing, and the picture wasn't a bit valuable. It's no matter, except to show how clumsy and butter-fingered I've got to be. Come, let's see what that yellow lad's got for dinner."

Once more I read my part for silence as we filed from

the dark room and across the outer stateroom, but mystery was gathering thick about me.

"Butter-fingered! He, indeed!" I muttered to myself, as I brought up the rear. "His hand's as steady as a rifleman's, and he had just told me he wouldn't take fifty dollars for that negative. I guess I'd better go slow in confab for a while."

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN STEVENS AGAIN.

The mahogany-trimmed saloon greeted us cheerfully with its immaculate linen and polished silver, and I contrasted the environment with the last place in which I had partaken of food, the forecastle. And I then and there resolved to play every card I had or could gather to stay "aft."

My appetite was whetted, even during the short time since the homely meal old Steve had provided; and, indeed, we all tackled the splendid food with zest.

There were four of us; Stroth, his daughter, Stevens, and myself.

Stevens had been the last to enter, which he did from his own stateroom, situated still farther aft.

"You, Mr. Grey, and Captain Stevens have met before, I believe," said Stroth, without a quiver, and the little man and I each took the hint, and shook hands cordially enough, though I did feel kind of funny when I did so. But I was more surprised when Stroth followed this up with:

"And now you see Captain Stevens, Stella," whereupon the captain bowed in most courtly manner, while I wondered considerably.

"We scarcely had time back there on the launch to get acquainted, did we, captain?" she said lightly.

Stevens shot me a quick glance, as he replied:

"But I hope the acquaintance will have a better chance for a time now, Miss Stella."

So the girl hadn't seen him before I had myself!

Stroth's manner was carefree and easy, and he acted the most genial host. I could feel that the manner in which I had so humbly submitted to the revelations of the past few minutes had relieved his mind of all uneasiness. He knew I had taken my cue.

The Jap, Saki, was deftness itself in his service, and the start of this little trip to Savannah was certainly auspicious, for at sea the gastronomics are certainly important.

When the meal was over, and, at Stella Stroth's suggestion, we all went up on deck where we found that the wind had lessened somewhat. The afternoon bade fair to be one of perfect midsummer.

And so, two by two, we paced a constitutional up and down the windward quarter-deck. Stroth and his daughter walked together while Stevens and I followed, keeping our conversation absolutely on generalities.

Suddenly the girl whirled and faced us.

"I was just suggesting to father," she said, "that nothing could be finer than such a day as this for taking pictures."

Of a surety the idea was as harmless a one as I could possibly imagine. It certainly was an ideal light to work in for clear-cut, sharp-shadowed snapshots. But the very hint of such a thing had a noteworthy effect upon both men,

Stroth's face first lit up to a trace of enthusiasm, but this spark was rapidly quenched by a troubled look of almost doglike humbleness when he met the hasty glance Stevens cast him.

And I could plainly see that Stevens himself was distinctly worried as he strove to shunt the idea.

"Mr. Stroth has often told me that vivid sunlight such as this makes too great contrasts."

"Oh, nonsense, daddy!" cried the daughter. "Of course, if one wanted absolutely artistic effects, maybe so; but what I'd want would be just some 'homy' pictures of the decks, the sails, the things about us. Ah, I love it all so! You don't know, dad, how I've missed the old *Ruby Light!* Come now, just a half dozen."

She whirled on me.

"You're with me, aren't you, Mr. Grey?"

With her? Well, rather! Nor could I see the slightest harm in my saying so.

"Why, I think it would be fine!" I exclaimed enthusiastically.

One can imagine my bewilderment at the result that immediately followed my concurrence.

Stroth's features took on what was almost a defiance, and a defiance that was directed at Stevens; while the little captain favored me with a scowl that carried actual anger. And, just like a schoolboy that has been permitted to break some bounds, Stroth trotted happily down the companionway in search of one of his cameras.

The next half hour he spent in the full delight of his hobby, and he certainly had the knack of poising his subject; he knew composition—had it all at his finger tips.

But from the first of the picturetaking, Stevens had excused himself on the strength of working his reckoning, and I didn't see him till supper time.

We three, however, got along famously, and, when supper did come, we fell to like so many children in a heartiness which even Stevens' sour looks couldn't check.

Supper done, the table was cleared, and we played fan-tan till four bells.

"Early hours aboard this packet!" cried Stroth boyishly. "And ten o'clock's a good bedtime. Off and away with you now, girlie."

She kissed him on the cheek, and bade us each a happy good night. I still believe mine was the best. There was a certain hesitancy about it that I relished immensely.

Stroth turned to me as soon as she had left us.

"Saki will show you your stateroom, Grey. I've even managed to drum up a change or two of clothes, which may be a bit overlarge for you, but—"

"But, under circumstances which brought me aboard your—"

I certainly had taken a wrong tack, for he cried out sharply:

"A pleasure trip to Savannah, remember!"

"I beg pardon!" I hastened to say, as I followed the Jap who had popped into sight at the sound of a buzzer.

But before I gained the stateroom assigned me, and had closed the door, I heard Stroth ask Stevens:

"How's the wind blowing?"

"There's a point or two more no'th'ard to it, but it holds about the same strength, and, of course, it's fair."

"Fine!" ejaculated the owner. "So we ought to be about off Montauk to-morrow morning, oughtn't we?"

"About that," replied the skipper. Then he lowered his tone just as I was closing my door in dismissal of the Jap. I couldn't catch a word, but the voice carried solicitude of some sort.

Then came Stroth's reply; rather a petulant one, I thought:

"Yes, yes, Stevens; I promise. Yes, yes, of course!"

There was certainly a difference in my quarters of this night and the one previous; for that little stateroom, though plain enough, was the essence of convenience, and the berth was comfort itself.

But, tired as I was, I couldn't get to sleep right away. Things had been happening a trifle too fast, and one or two points were puzzling. I sat on a transom fully an hour. Then I crawled into the suit of pajamas that had been laid out for me, propped up the pillows at the bunk end, and ruminated.

"I know what I want," I finally mumbled to myself, "and that's a smoke."

It seemed as if I must have that smoke. I have since cured myself of the habit, but it held me strong enough then, as is evident when I add that I finally decided to have a try at finding the humidor which Stroth had handed me in his picture-papered stateroom.

"It's worth a try, anyway," said I to myself. "He wouldn't mind, of course. And I can manage it without disturbing a soul."

I opened my door cautiously, and crossed the saloon, which was dimly lighted by a night lamp of small candle power. Fortune favored me in that the farther door was slightly ajar. I opened it a bit farther, then craned my neck for a view.

"There it is," said I mentally, as I recognized the dim outline of the box of cigars, and noiselessly I opened it and took one.

I had almost regained the saloon when I heard a faint noise and the click of glassware. I turned attentively, and under the lower crack of the farther door there filtered out to me the deep-red glow of the dark room.

But, for all the trouble I had taken to get the cigar, I didn't finish it. By the time it was half smoked I got very sleepy, and the next thing I knew—as Uncle Remus says—"I didn't know nuffin."

CHAPTER XII.

THE OWNER'S ORDERS.

I awoke to Saki's knock next morning, shaved in the warm water he had had the good sense to bring, and was first to reach the table.

I was quickly joined by Stevens, and I saw that his mood had bettered little since the evening. He acknowledged my presence with a dry nod; but, as we were finishing the simple meal, he assured himself that we were alone in the saloon by a hasty glance around, then asked low, but sharply:

"I suppose you know what will be your best course?"

"I believe you gave me that countersign even as far back as the dock end at College Point when you left me: 'A closed mouth spills no mush.'"

"Exactly!" And he quitted the room for the deck immediately, while I whirled at the opening of a door and rose as Miss Stella entered.

"Why, are you all finished?" she cried. "I certainly must be a sleepyhead!"

She was as fresh and clear as the summer morning sifting through the open ports.

"Well, scarcely a sleepyhead," I replied. "Your father hasn't shown up yet, so you're not the last."

"Oh, yes, I guess I am the last, for all that," she returned, digging away in dainty defiance at an iced grapefruit.

"Because, you see," she added, "there goes Saki now with daddy's toast and coffee." She nodded toward the Jap, who was just entering the owner's stateroom. "You see"—and she laughed lightly—"yesterday was picture-taking day. Now it's dark room, and Heaven knows when we'll see him next—that is, if he's like he used to be, dear old dad!"

"Used to be?" I couldn't check the question in spite of me.

"Why, yes. Didn't you know? I haven't even been aboard this *Ruby Light* in over three years. I suppose, even when daddy made the bet then, he didn't explain that I'd been in a convent in France 'most three years, and needed some excitement? No?"

"Made the bet?" I echoed, mystified beyond measure. Then she laughed heartily.

"Oh, come, come now, Mr. Grey! Just because you lost the wager, you mustn't play possum about it all. You know as well as I do that even before dad came to France to get me, he made this bet with Captain Pawlinson that, for all he'd made such a hit as a detective at Washington, he couldn't catch us before we sailed for Savannah. Just for a lark, of course. And wasn't it fun, though? Daddy always was a wonderful hand when it came to anything in the adventure line, and I come honestly enough by it."

Thank the Lord, she was bubbling away, and taking little notice of how her words were affecting me; and I got all out of the interval I could in controlling my amazement. So this absurd yarn was what had been cooked up for her benefit! I wondered that, even convent bred as she was, she was unsophisticated enough to believe it.

But her next words came as almost reply:

"You see, Mr. Grey, my father is a man of—well, shall I say eccentricities? And he certainly does do some of the oddest things! It's just possible," she added naïvely, "that it's because we Stroths have always had plenty of money. Don't you think so?"

"Ye-es, yes. Of course, that must be it." I was groping for an avenue of temporary escape, so seized upon the commonplace: "And now, Miss Stroth, how about a walk on deck?"

She laid down her napkin, and rose buoyantly. "Splendid! Oh, this is better than France, I tell you, Mr. Grey! I'll be with you in just a minute, for unless I wear a hat on deck for the first day or two I burn like the dickens in the sun."

There was something rather delicious in the way she said this that made us both laugh, and I was still chuckling when I mounted the steps to the deck.

Once more the sun shone clear, but I noted an unsettled haziness to westward that might bring a change before night.

Once more the smart schooner was undergoing its daily grooming. Old Steve was distributing polishing kits to four of the men, though he stopped long enough to take a tug at his forelock in salute. Evidently my

reception aft had made a great impression upon him, as well it might.

But I returned the greeting as democratically as I could, and turned to a question that came sharply from behind me.

It was Stevens.

"Did Mr. Stroth come to breakfast?" said he, without preliminary.

"No," I replied, as directly. "The Jap took it in to him."

Not another word passed, but he looked his chagrin, which bordered upon anger. Then he paced back to his position on the quarter-deck.

The few minutes that were left me alone I gave to thinking over the revelations just made me by this girl.

I watched the waters swirling past the beam, though they let in no light upon the mystery. But I did glow with delight at the thought that, whatever shady guilt hung over that low-lying vessel, it was not shared by her.

My feeling toward her hadn't changed a whit; I loved her even more intensely, but certainly it was a strange situation. There was a quietness about it all, an inevitability that bore the irrevocable stamp of fate itself. Pre-determined it was—my love for her—and, as such, to be greeted quietly, mildly. It was decided, and I was happy.

I know how absurd this sounds as I thus word it, but it's as near as I can come to the actual fact.

She joined me within ten minutes, and began chatting happily about everything around us.

I noticed that the course had been shifted westward during the night, which brought us closer by the wind, and our leeward rail was gurgling to a smart angle of heel. It was fine sailing.

"Oh, look!" cried the girl. "The mist is lifting." She pointed to starboard, a bit forward of our beam. "Captain Stevens," and she trotted over to him, "what lighthouse is that?"

"You've a quick eye, Miss Stella," replied Stevens. "It's Montauk Point."

She clapped her hands delightedly.

"And haven't they wireless there?"

"To be sure they have. If the fog lifts a little more you'll be able to see the apparatus."

"Then let's communicate with them! Won't that be fun? You're the operator yourself, aren't you, captain?"

"Yes," the little man answered slowly, "but I'm afraid we can't do much talking with our own instrument, Miss Stella. You see, we broke it on the way to Portland."

"Oh, well, then we can't, of course," she said, in disappointment.

It was a lie on Stevens' part, but it was a lie that I rather rejoiced in, for it certainly would not do to have the shore wireless suspect who we were. I knew Pawlinson well enough by now not to want that.

And so, with the whimsicality of her temperament, she offered to compromise for her disappointment if she could have a "trick" at the wheel.

"Oh, that'll be easy enough," agreed Stevens, glad to shift the topic as he motioned the fellow at the helm to one side.

And the next two minutes proved that she knew that game well. I can see her now, braced to the roll—her little hands clutching the spokes sturdily—her eyes with

the upward minding of the mainsail's quivering luff, for we were sailing a taut full-and-by.

There was a girl for you!

I have never witnessed a more violent shift of weather in such latitude, or a more sudden.

Perhaps it was because the fog bank had kept it from us longer than we supposed, and only lifted just in time to give us our slight warning.

For that fog did suddenly clear, though it cleared but for another and greater blackness.

As lowering and menacing a thunderhead as ever whipped out of the northwest was all but upon us.

Now, all this rot in books about even the very seconds being precious makes me tired, for you usually have plenty of time to snug down for a blow.

But this time it really was a question of minutes before that squall would strike us.

And Stevens saw it as soon or sooner than I did, though he certainly went about his preparation in a way that was decidedly not of the usual practice.

I could see that he was distinctly excited, but I could swear it was not nervousness at the approaching blow, however it might be connected with it.

Without a single word, he nodded to the fellow to resume the helm, while he simply smiled the girl into relinquishing it. Then he stepped quietly forward, and up to old Steve, who had never taken his eyes from his chief since the second the storm had been sighted.

The command was given in an actual whisper, and the men virtually tiptoed at the nimble work of shortening sail.

The main tops'l had been clewed, the flying jib doused, and five fellows were about to man the main halyards to lower—all in a dead silence, broken only by the grumble of the thunder which would soon be upon us—when a sudden yell fairly froze us by its virulence.

And up through the companionway bounded Carl Stroth!

I'll not soon forget the light in those eyes of his as he bellowed:

"Here, you lily-livered hounds! What? Douse sail for a puny summer shower? What d'ye think we are? Children? Come now, you lame duck!" and he swung Stevens around. "I'll give an order or two myself—somethin' worthy of the *Ruby Light*! Up with that mainsail again! Now the jib! Topsail! All of 'em, I say!"

As well try to cork Vesuvius.

The sails reset, he elbowed the fellow from the wheel, and took it himself just as the first fury descended upon us.

She was a noble vessel in a blow, as I could see, but she had lost some way, and had no time to recover. Expert at the wheel as he was, it was too much to expect of timber.

She quivered an instant to the first flaw, then followed the deadlier, heavier wind.

There was a minute of sharp list as cordage groaned. Then we shot back suddenly to an absolutely even keel, while a thumping started against the leeward planking.

Both masts had been carried away clean and true to the deck line!

CHAPTER XIII.

GENUINE NERVE.

There's a sensation akin to pain in the midriff when a mast goes by the board. It is bad enough when actual stress of heavy weather brings that sickening, crunching crackle. But this thing was positive wantonness; this setting of extra canvas to a whipping "frother," new canvas, at that, and without even the precaution of a single "preventer!" Old sails would have saved the sticks.

In that first instant of terror, the girl instinctively clutched me, and I held her fast a moment in my happiness before I assured her:

"There's not a bit of danger! It's just a mess, that's all!"

And it certainly was a mess!

The schooner swallowed in the trough of the quick sea that had followed the squall's first fury, the sorriest mass of confusion imaginable. It was a positive sin.

The masts, still hanging to the shrouds which hadn't all parted, thumped their menace against the planking of the side; the main boom, still fast to its sheet, ground at the mahogany rail as it sawed between goose-neck and traveler.

The canvas, mountains of it, flapped, rolled, and puffed frantically, a matted mass of cordage to leeward, wire stays of stiff crinkle, turnbuckles, spreaders, and blocks.

It was a time that called for quick action.

And quick action it got. I never saw greater promptness. Stroth was fairly beside himself, and his emotion was—joy!

"Oho!" he bellowed, in positive happiness, the very instant we righted to an even keel, "here we have it now—and something like!"

Then he was all over the boat, roaring orders in a tone of voice of which I never would have believed him capable.

And, quick to the inspiration of that personality, the men jumped to the task of clearing away.

"Toss me that ax!" cried the owner to old Steve, and he himself went at a steel stay that held a spar from moving.

"Tie first, then cut!" He had a sharp way with him that made you start an instant before you sprang to the task. I felt the impulse of it, though my place was certainly to soothe the girl. Then he caught a look at me over his shoulder, and shouted:

"Take her below, Grey, to her cabin. I'll need you in five minutes. And, mind you, look sharp!"

I know when to obey a man—and silently.

The girl still clung to me, but her terror came not so much from the vessel's condition as it sprang from consternation at the remarkable change in her father.

But she didn't say a word except to thank me when I left her at her stateroom door.

"I'm all right now, Mr. Grey," she said quietly, though the haunt of some indefinite fear still showed in those wonderful eyes of hers. "You'd better get back to deck. He may need you."

And the way she said that pronoun told where the trouble lay.

Even in the short interval I had been below deck, the weather had taken on a change for the better. A quick

squall is almost always a short one, bearing out the old adage: "Short warning, soon past."

But, though the wind had fallen, we again faced that clammy nuisance, fog. For, as though it had but lifted to give us the warning Stroth did not heed, the mist once more settled its gloomy mantle over us—almost in disgust, I was pleased to fancy.

The vessel still was rolling to the trough, but a certain sort of order was beginning to show out of the chaos of the minutes preceding.

Stroth caught sight of me, and cried:

"Come, lend a hand here, Grey! Every pound counts at this!"

A quick glance about told me the scheme—a scheme which had come to him the very instant of the crash. All the hampering rigging had been cut away, and the spars, secured to lines, now floated aft, a tangled mass.

"On deck with it, you see!" he exclaimed heartily, as he looked over his men that stood about him. And from that instant I realized that they were really *his* men.

There was a spirit in their way of jumping to his bark, a sprightliness of real zest, a vim that told its own story of master and crew. They loved him as much as they feared him. It's a good combination aboard ship.

And Stevens? He was one of the crew now; though I still read great worry in his face.

And it was to old-fashioned "yo-ho-ing" that we fairly sang the spars over the taffrail onto deck; the mainmast to starboard, the foremast to port. A tackle rigged to the bitts had done the trick.

When everything was lashed fast, Stroth motioned Stevens to the position at the wheel. Excitement, the joy of it, still lighted his eye.

Then, with a "Come on, Grey!" he strode forward, and disappeared before me through a midship hatch. I followed down an iron ladder, and found myself in the engine room, where old Steve had already preceded us.

"Located the trouble?" demanded Stroth.

"Yaas, sir!" grunted the old bo's'n. "But it's wuss'n I thought fust. Shaft's bent."

"You're something of a doctor in this sort of thing, Grey?" It was more assertion than query. At least, he didn't wait for an answer before adding:

"Old Steve'll show you the tools, and I needn't say that the quicker we get way on the schooner, the better."

"Meanwhile," he went on, and his tone varied not a whit from its evenness, "I guess I'd better take a minute now getting this flipper back into commission."

He withdrew his left hand from his jacket pocket, where it had been hidden, and I believe that that incident told me more of Carl Stroth than I ever could have learned otherwise.

"You see," he explained simply, "one of the lads, in his eagerness to cut adrift a while back, missed his aim a trifle."

He unbound a tight-wrapped handkerchief. It was a nasty cut to look at, for the blade had found the fleshy part of the palm between wrist and little finger. The cut was clear to the bone.

"Good heavens, Mr. Stroth!" I cried. "You'd better wash that clean immediately. Have you any peroxide of _____"

His answer was a clear laugh, genuine and boyish. Then he mounted the ladder with the agility of an acrobat. One hand to the rungs is no light feat in itself.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A DOUBLE TRICK.

By A. L. SMALL.

When the four of us got back to boarding school, after the holidays, the first thing we did was to "put up a job" on Plug, the old fellow who occupied the dormitory with us.

"I've got it," said Decker. "We'll dissect him. I don't mean out and out; but just make believe, you know. I've an uncle that's a medical man," and he told me all about it. "I'll tell Plug we're going to study anatomy, and must have a subject; and we'll have some jolly fun. To-night the professor is going to a lecture, and takes his wife with him, so we'll go up to our dormitory after study hour, and open the door between Plug's room and ours, and lock the outside ones. We'll have a table and knives, and a bucket for the blood, and everything prepared, and he'll believe it all, eh?"

"Jolly!" said I.

And then we set to work to talk it over, sitting on the bench under the dining-room window, and mightily scared we were, to be sure, when, after a while, the window went up behind us, and Plug himself poked his head out. He hadn't heard a word, though; for all he said was:

"Mornin', young gents. I hope you've had a merry Christmas?"

When Decker makes up his mind to do a thing, he does it. And that night all seemed easy. The professor took his wife to the lecture. The assistant marched the little uns to bed at nine.

Then we heard Plug stumble up, and at ten we four filed upstairs. We'd bought candles and smuggled a couple of long boards up, and I took the sheets off my bed, and spread them over the boards.

Then we took out our four knives, rolled up our shirt sleeves, unlocked Plug's door, and marched in.

Plug lay sound asleep in bed, or looked as if he did; and Decker walked up to him and shook him.

"Wake up, Plug; you are wanted," said he solemnly.

Plug lifted up his head.

"Tain't mornin', is it?" asked he.

"No," said Decker. "Science does not wait for morning."

"Hey?" said Plug.

"Rise and follow us," said Decker.

"I shan't do no such thing," said Plug. "None of your tricks now, young gents."

"This is no trick," said Decker solemnly. "Follow us."

Plug got up, wrapped in a queer old dressing gown that he slept in, and came toddling after us. When he saw the stretcher in the middle of our room, he stood quite still.

"What's that for?" asked he.

"Plug," said Decker, "it is for scientific purposes. We are now medical students, and we must study anatomy. You are a splendid subject, being all bones, and we are

going to dissect you. We'll give you chloroform, if you like, but we must do it. You know you can't help yourself; so be quiet."

"Be quiet, and be dissected? No, young gents—no, indeed," quavered Plug; "but it's only a joke. Now, ha' done, an' let an old man go to bed."

"Plug," said Decker, "this is folly. Hoist him up, boys!"

And we four seized the old man and laid him on the boards. He struggled less than we expected. He didn't believe it yet.

"Tie him," said Decker.

We did it. He only flopped about a little, like a dying fish.

"Do you want to say a prayer?" asked Decker.

"Now, do ha' done, young gents," said Plug. "You don't dare for to murder me."

"Dissecting is lawful," said Decker, as he took out his knife.

"Help!" cried Plug—"professor—Mr. Jangs—missis—help, help!"

"Silence," said Decker. "Gentlemen, you perceive this is the breastbone. I commence here."

He lowered his knife. At that instant Plug gave a jump, and it wasn't so much that the knife went into him as that he went into the knife. His breast—a bulgy, chicken breast he had—went right up, the point stuck, and out poured the blood—not a few drops, but quarts of it—all over him, all over the sheet, down on the painted floor. Decker's hands were red, so were his pants.

"Oh, dear!" he screamed, "oh, what have I done? Oh, Plug, it was only a joke! Oh, I didn't mean to! Oh, oh, oh! Get up! Say you ain't hurt?"

"Young gent," said Plug faintly, "I'm murdered. You'll be hung; that's my comfort. Good-by."

And with that his tongue stuck out of his mouth perfectly black, and his eyes rolled up, and he gasped and gurgled.

"Dead!" shrieked Decker, and tumbled over on the floor; and just then—rap, rap, rap at the door, and the professor's voice:

"What's all this noise, young gentlemen?"

"Please, sir," I cried, "Sprat has had a nightmare;" and my teeth chattered so I could not speak.

"Tell Sprat to remember that nightmares disturb the house," said the professor, "and that I disapprove of them."

Then he went slowly downstairs, and Decker lifted up his head again, and said:

"Dead! Dead! We'll all be hung!"

"You'll be," said Sprat. "Not us."

"Accomplices," said Decker. "Oh, dear, oh!"

"Well," said Brown, the coolest of us all, "the thing is done. It can't be helped. All we can do is to hide it. We must put him back in his room and lock both doors, leaving the knife in his hand; then wash up the floor, burn the sheets, throw the boards out of the window, and go to bed. It will be called suicide, and we'll escape."

"But we've killed him," said Decker. "I'm a murderer, so are you—all of you."

"You don't want to be hung, do you?" cried Brown. "We didn't mean to do it. Shut up—don't betray your-

selves. Come, boys! Sprat, make a fire out of copy books. Roper, pitch these boards out of the window. Wait. Here, Decker, catch hold of poor Plug. We must have him in bed first."

"I can't touch him," said Decker. "I'd die."

"Then, Roper, come here!" said Brown. "Don't mind. Shut your eyes, if you have to. What did we get ourselves in this box for? How his tongue sticks out, and how black it is! I'm sick—oh, how sick I am! I say, if we don't hurry, we'll all be hung! Think of your mothers! Mine would die! There, that's brave!"

And so we carried poor Plug back into the little room we had dragged him from, and put him into bed, put the knife in his flabby hand, and rushed out, locking him in. Then it was easier to work, the three of us. Decker couldn't do anything, and we covered him up in his bedclothes. It took Brown and Sprat and me all night to tear the big linen sheets up and burn them bit by bit, and to scrub the floor.

After that there was Decker in a sort of spasm, and we had to wash his hands and face, undress him, and wash his things like a baby.

Five o'clock struck when we finally tumbled into bed, cold and miserable and horror-stricken; but if we could have slept otherwise, Decker's moans would have kept us awake.

We four oldest scholars breakfasted with the professor and Mrs. Stuffemwell. Plug usually waited. We knew he wouldn't this morning—couldn't—and every minute we expected to hear cries and calls of murder; but nothing of the sort happened.

We dragged Decker up, and dressed him, and he went down with us, the worst-looking object you ever saw; but the professor didn't notice his looks, Mrs. Stuffemwell, either, until when he said: "Will you be helped to steak, Decker?" he answered.

"Heaven forgive me! No."

Then naturally says he:

"Decker, are you going crazy?"

We didn't know what was coming now, but Brown up and answered:

"If you please, I think Decker is very sick, and a little out of his mind since the nightmare."

"I thought it was Sprat who had the nightmare," said Mrs. Stuffemwell.

"We made a mistake in the dark. It was Decker," said Brown.

"Decker will do the ten extra problems, then, instead of Sprat," said the professor.

Just then in came the assistant.

"Professor," he said, speaking very fast, "the school fire is not made. Plug is not up yet."

"Poor old man," said Mrs. Stuffemwell; "he is growing feeble. Let him sleep. One of the women will make the fire."

"They were saying he might have had a fit or something in the night, sir," said the assistant. "His door's locked."

"No, no. I trust not," said the professor. "I trust not. A worthy old man that; and, by the way, his name is not Plug. Nicknames are very indiscreet, Mr. Ginger."

"Beg pardon. I should have said Thomas," said Mr. Ginger. "I've no doubt Thomas is very well."

Poor Decker gave a groan.

"Two more problems, Decker," said the professor. "You must have another nightmare."

Then, breakfast being over, we went into the recitation room, and the professor read a chapter. It was that one where Cain kills Abel. When he got to where he says: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Decker tumbled over on the floor, and had to be taken out and have water put to his head.

After a while, talking it over, we decided that the family knew that Plug was dead, and wanted to hide what they supposed to be his suicide from the school, for fear of losing scholars, and that eased us three a little; but nothing helped Decker.

He sat in an awful state of mind, trying to do his problems in vain, and talking to himself.

At dinner he ate nothing. At tea time he was worse, for he was seasick, and had to be carried out. And when study hour came, there he was with his problems again.

The young ones had gone to bed. Mr. Ginger, also. The professor presided at the study table, and Mrs. Stuffemwell sat by the fire, crocheting.

All was very still, when, suddenly, there came three knocks on the door. The professor never stirred. They came again.

"Shall I open the door, sir?" said Brown.

"For what?" asked the professor.

"A knock, sir," said Brown.

"I heard none; but see," said the professor.

Brown opened the door. There was no one there.

He took his seat again. Before he had lifted his book, the door was pushed open, and in walked some one. The professor took no notice; neither did Mrs. Stuffemwell. But Brown, staring, as we all did, cried out:

"Why, there's Plug."

"Where?" asked the professor.

"There," said I. "There," said we all, pointing to the spot.

"I see no one in the room but ourselves," said the professor, "and I have private reasons to believe that Thomas, whom you impolitely call Plug, will not be here to-night. I shall not mention why I think so here."

"But I see him," cried Decker.

"There!" said Sprat.

"There!" said I.

"There!" said Brown.

"How dare you say so, young gentlemen?" said Mrs. Stuffemwell.

But we all saw Plug, white as a sheet, his black tongue sticking out of his mouth; and as he came toward us, and we saw a red stain on his breast, we knew it was his ghost; and Decker uttered an awful yell, and flung himself on his knees, and began to pray for mercy on his soul. And then the professor began to roar, and Mrs. Stuffemwell to shriek with laughter, and Plug, pulling something black out of his mouth, laughed, too.

"I've had revenge enough, young gents," said he. "I don't want to kill nobody, nor to dissect 'em, neither; but I'd had tricks enough played on me, and I thought I'd see if I couldn't play one, too. Asking professor's leave, I heard your plans at the window; and as I've been with traveling play actors in my time, I knew what a bladder of blood could do, and jest how to manage the whole of it. And so I've had my turn for once, I

hope, if you do think me a fool—as I ain't, young gents, I promise you."

With which Plug bowed to the professor and Mrs. Stuffemwell, and toddled away, out of the room.

We three were glad to get a caning next day, but Decker was too sick to bear one for a week; and I know, for he told me so, that he never attempted to play a joke on any one again.

MOVING THE JURY.

A Canadian barrister named McSweeny was a thorough student of human nature, and master of the art of observation. Nothing escaped his notice. While engaged upon a case, he watched the jury as a cat watches a mouse, and frequently astonished his clients by ending his arguments very abruptly and submitting the matter to the jury.

"I've known many a case to be talked to death after it had been won," he said. "What is the use of wasting time and breath after the jury is converted to your way of thinking? I believe I can tell when I have my jury well in hand. At that point I stop, no matter in what shape it leaves my speech. I take it that a client employs a lawyer to win his case, and not to display his oratorical abilities."

The peculiarity of the great criminal lawyer was well known at a murder trial in Montreal a few years ago. Mr. McSweeny appeared for the defendant. The state had apparently made out a very clear case against the prisoner. When Mr. McSweeny arose to make his address to the jury, he carefully avoided any reference to the facts set forth in the evidence or the laws governing them. He pointed out the terrible responsibility resting upon the twelve men who were sitting in judgment upon the life of one of their fellow citizens. He added that the verdict of guilty would not fall heaviest upon the prisoner, but upon his family. He asked the jury to think for a moment of the effect of an adverse verdict upon the wife and little ones of the prisoner.

Then the lawyer drew a word picture which was a marvel of artistic rhetorical work. He brought before the eyes of the jurymen the home of the accused man. He showed the patient and loving wife leaving her work to cast many an anxious glance down the road to see if her husband was yet in sight, eager to be the first to catch a glimpse of his figure in the distance, that a steaming supper might await him upon his arrival. He pictured these ruddy-faced children swinging upon the old gate waiting till papa should come home to them.

At this point, the lawyer noticed that one of the jurymen had considerable difficulty in swallowing a large lump which choked him, and that there was a suspicious moisture in his eye.

The speaker paused. Turning toward that juror, he held out both hands as a little child might have done to its father, and said, in a tone that was scarcely audible:

"Gentlemen, you must send him home to them."

Shifting uneasily in his seat, the juror blurted out:

"Yes, we'll do it, too."

McSweeny instantly sat down. The case was won. His client was acquitted. But the most interesting point in this case, perhaps, was the fact, which the lawyer afterward learned, that the prisoner at the bar was an unmarried man.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

City Bars Noisy Weddings.

Hereafter wedding celebrations in Cambridge, Mass., must be brief and noiseless by order of the Cambridge aldermen. The board also has voted to ask Harvard to appoint a watchman to chaperon Jarvis Street, known as "Lovers' Lane."

Mystery of Missing Money.

City Treasurer Lauth, of Lock Haven, Pa., has been losing paper money from his cash box. During the year thirty-three dollars was missing. He could not account for these losses until a few days ago, when he found a partly gnawed five-dollar bill on a shelf. He then came to the conclusion that mice have done the mischief.

Minor Leagues Lose in Fight.

The minor leagues are not to be in on any settlement of the baseball war. The meeting held at Omaha, Neb., at which it was proposed that they demand representation on the National Baseball Commission came to an end without any such demand. The major leagues are thus left to deal with a free hand with the outlaw Federal League, which has caused so much trouble in organized baseball.

Officials of the National Commission handed the minor leaguers a lot of nice talk at the meeting. They did not explain, however, how the minors are to be protected against a repetition of the losses they suffered last season, when the Federals lured away their players without paying the clubs anything.

Mushroom Seventy-three Inches Around.

Joseph L. Ball, of Moon Run, Pa., acknowledges his defeat in his recent biggest mushroom claims. He sends to the *Blade* a letter he received from L. R. Daily, a student in Lake View High School, Chicago. The student's letter follows:

"DEAR SIR: I noticed an article in the *Blade* stating that you had the largest mushroom ever grown. Well, if that is the largest one that you ever saw, come out to Chicago, and I will show you mushrooms twice as large as the one you had. I have seen and had big mushrooms, one especially that measured seventy-three inches in circumference. I send you the signatures of six fellow students, who will back my statement."

Large Ape Attacks Trainer.

A large ape escaped from its cage at the McKees Rocks, Pa., museum, and Harry Morkey, a trainer of wild animals, started to drive it back. The ape made a ferocious fight. Jumping on Morkey's shoulders, the animal bit off his right ear and he was badly lacerated on his head. Morkey fell from pain and exhaustion, and the ape ran into the street. Chased by dogs, it ran back into the building and was caught.

Kind Act in Civil War Brings Reward Now.

A chance meeting in Laporte, Ind., of John Blakely, a wealthy Mississippi plantation owner, and James Terry, aged eighty, father of Postmaster Terry, of Laporte, broke

the silence of fifty-three years, and will bring to the Laporte man the reward of a winter home in the South, surrounded by all the luxuries money can provide.

Terry lived in Tennessee during the war. One day a squad of Union men were surprised by a company of Confederate scouts. Blakely was one of the scouts, and in the engagement was wounded and left on the field to die. He was found by Terry, taken by the latter to his home, and nursed back to life. Terry came North, and Blakely, after his recovery, returned to the war. After its close he was successful in amassing a fortune.

A letter received by Terry this week stated that a daughter, Mrs. Gertrude Sands, of Grand Rapids, would come here and arrange for the trip of Terry to Mississippi, where she declares her father will pay his debt of gratitude after a lapse of more than half a century.

Tells of Life in Wild.

Addressing the Rocky Mountain Hotel Men's Convention, at Denver, Col., Enos A. Mills asked the members to advertise Colorado's scenery and climate.

"We needn't fear the fact that the State has gone dry," said he. "There is no dodging the fact that thousands who come to Denver and to Colorado as tourists do so for the climate and scenery, and not the booze. Let us show them that we have the climate and the scenery, then."

Mills reports that game and wild animals are increasing remarkably in the Estes Park district. He predicts that a national park will be established in that region this winter.

Several tame grouse are the latest members of the wild-animal kingdom to invade Mills' back yard in Estes Park. He says there is a colony of beavers engaged in work one block from the Estes Park post office.

Just a Joking Hand Crusher.

C. B. Galloway, fifty, of Los Angeles, who is 5 feet and 6 inches and weighs 130 pounds, is defendant in a suit for \$5,178.50, brought by G. W. Markham, who alleges that a crushing handshake by Galloway almost ended his life.

"My hand was so badly crushed," Markham says, "that blood poisoning developed and I lost a finger."

"Jack" Jeffries, testifying for Markham, said he once shook hands with Galloway, and that he would rather take a chance with a vise than try it again.

Letters Cost Their Lives.

Soldiers in the German army who are without knowledge of censors sometimes sign their own death warrants, according to David M. Pfaelzer, a member of the board of assessors of Chicago. Pfaelzer has received numerous letters from Germany recently showing that the mail service is not seriously interfered with. All of the letters were opened and read by German censors, however, and the day that he received a letter telling of the death of a relative in battle, Pfaelzer received information of the death of a cousin of an acquaintance.

"It seems that a number of soldiers from Alsace are deserting," said Pfaelzer. "The censors read all of the mail sent by these soldiers. One of my friends received a letter from a cousin in the army, who told of the desertions, and said that he did not blame them, and expected to desert to the French army himself within a few weeks. The next letter, from another relative, told of the execution of the soldier. A censor had read his letter, grimly permitted it to pass on to its destination, and then summoned the soldier for court-martial."

Four Boys Get Big Corn Yield.

Four brothers, members of the Boys' Corn Club, of Georgia, produced 824 bushels of corn on four acres of land this year. Luther Allred, of Pickens County, one of the brothers, won first prize at the State Fair for the greatest yield from one acre. He produced 227 bushels.

British Blood to Frenchman.

There is bravery in the hospital as well as on the battlefield. A wounded French soldier was in danger of dying from hemorrhage, and the surgeon decided that only immediate transfusion of blood could save his life. Hearing this, a Briton named Isidore Colas, who lay on an adjoining cot nearly cured of his own wounds, volunteered to supply the necessary blood.

The cots were moved together, arteries were sutured, and for two hours Colas felt his own blood flowing into his comrade's enfeebled body. Cold sweat ran in streams from his forehead, but he said not a word. When the operation was over, his comrade revived somewhat, though not enough to speak. He reached an arm slowly toward Colas, drew him close, and kissed him on both cheeks in the French fashion.

His Magic Power Brings No \$5,000.

The payment of twenty-four dollars in exchange for the magic rites of a negro conjurer has failed to bring a promised fortune to Mrs. John Knox, an aged widow of Charlotte, N. C. The negro appeared at Mrs. Knox's home and told her there was hidden beneath her house a handsome fortune of \$5,000 in gold, all of which belonged to her if she would only accept it. The negro claimed to be the possessor of a wonderful magic power, which overnight would bring the gold from its hiding into the hands of the woman, and he charged only twenty-four dollars—all the old woman had—for his services. Since then Mrs. Knox has seen neither the gold nor the negro, she told the police.

Agony of a Miner Buried 112 Hours.

Entombed for five days and nights in a black hole ninety feet below the surface in the Sibley mine, at Ely, Minn., Joseph Skusik gasped out a tale of horror from his hospital cot.

For 112 hours Skusik fought hunger, thirst, and the fear that he was going mad. A few yards away, in the blackness of the mine drift, he heard another miner, imprisoned by the cave-in, shouting to him in despair while the dirt seeped slowly down for hours and hours.

"Then the dirt came with a rush," said Susik. "I heard him yell once—and then gurgle. Then it was all quiet, and I knew he was gone."

The body of the smothered miner, as yet unidentified, was brought to the surface when Skusik was hoisted to the top of the shaft. It lay a short distance from the spot where rescuers found Skusik, his leg pinioned by falling stone. An arch of timbers overhead protected Skusik from the falling earth.

"I dared not sleep," said Skusik, "for fear the dirt would smother me while I dozed. Little handfuls sifted through. I brushed them away with the hand that was free. I counted off the hours until my mind became a blank. If they say they heard me shouting, I must have been out of my head."

Feather of Quail Does X-ray Work.

While hunting in the Sierra Nevada Mountains recently, Doctor Barton J. Powell, of Stockton, Cal., met an old Indian who proved to him that an ordinary mountain-quail feather held before the eyes serves the same purpose as a powerful X-ray machine. Taking a feather from a quail he was plucking, the Indian held it before the doctor's eyes and put his hand up to the light. The bones of the hand were plainly visible through the flesh. The Indian said feathers had been used from time immemorial by his tribesmen as an aid in setting broken bones. He added that any feather produced the X-ray effect to some extent. Doctor Powell has sent a bunch of the quail feathers to California University for experimental purposes.

Millions for Italy's Army.

The cabinet council, at Rome, Italy, has sanctioned an extraordinary army appropriation of \$80,000,000. When the new war minister, General Zupelli, succeeded General Grandi, he urged an additional appropriation to hasten military preparations, but the head of the treasury department at that time was unwilling to sanction it, as the enormous outlay might impair the national finances. The minister resigned and the cabinet was reorganized.

General Zupelli repeated his request, explaining that the necessity was urgent. The council granted the demand immediately. Since August 1st, the extraordinary expenditure of the army and navy has amounted to about \$205,000,000. Due to this, the Italian navy has been kept mobilized since the war broke out, while the army has been fully prepared for action. The country is in a position to place in the field 750,000 men, fully equipped for a winter campaign.

Doomed to Blindness Girl Studies Hard.

Slowly becoming blind, with perhaps a year before her sight is blotted out, Alma Krager, of Burlington, Iowa, a freshman student in the liberal-arts college of the State University, has announced her determination to spend the last days before blindness in pursuit of her studies at Iowa.

The facts of her pitiful situation were disclosed following the visit of a Chicago specialist who made an examination of her eyes and predicted what is next to a fatality itself. Nothing can be done to save her sight, it is said, and total blindness is due within the coming year.

The doctor's verdict came as a hard blow, but has not changed the girl's determination to spend her last days of sight in study here. Even now temporary blindness comes, yet she still holds her place well at the head of her classes.

Last summer Miss Krager received a severe shock when a bolt of lightning struck but a few feet away from her during an electrical storm near her home. This, it appears, has affected the nerves controlling her eyesight, and nothing can be done to ward off the impending blindness.

Here's Some Football Score.

A remarkable game of football was played at Barnard, Kan., between the local team and a high-school team from Lincoln, Kan., when Barnard finished with 176 points to Lincoln's 0.

Girl Has Permit for Own Telephone System.

Wentzville, St. Charles County, Mo., will get its first local telephone exchange through the enterprise of Miss Cordelia F. Lusby, who is chief operator at Wentzville in the long-distance telephone service.

With her own means Miss Lusby will put in the poles, string the wires, and provide a central station. About seventy subscribers have been obtained. The total investment will be about \$3,000.

"Why shouldn't a woman establish and manage a local exchange if she chooses?" says Miss Lusby.

"Don't you think women have intelligence enough for that? It seems to me the telephone business is one for which women are peculiarly fitted.

"Wentzville, with a population of more than 800, never has had a local exchange, and there is a growing sentiment in favor of one. I have been chief long-distance operator here for the last nine years, and therefore feel my experience is sufficient to warrant my starting it.

"The citizens are giving their patronage to me more liberally than I had expected, and the success of the venture seems assured. The exchange will be operated day and night. My sister, Miss Elise L. Lusby, will assist me."

The public-service commission at Jefferson City has issued a certificate of public convenience, authorizing Miss Lusby to construct and operate the plant.

Twelve Prussians Catch the Bus.

As a heavy London motor omnibus dashed toward a British camp on the second line in northern France recently, a sentry fired, and the guard turned out with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets, for in the vehicle were twelve Prussian soldiers with packs and rifles. As the bus approached, the driver, a typical London busman, cried out:

"Don't shoot! They're feeding out of my hand. They're hungry."

The Prussians had been on outpost duty. When they saw the omnibus returning from the advanced British trenches, where it had delivered a load of ammunition, they stood in the middle of the road, threw up their hands, and surrendered, saying that they were starving.

Locked in Box Car Twenty-one Days Without Food.

A long freight train rolled into the yards at North Tonawanda, N. Y., and stopped. A brakeman twisted the seal in the ordinary hand-organ fashion and pushed back the door. What he saw caused him to jump back. A man, whose face was pale and colorless, lay sprawled upon the floor. In his hand was an apple core, brown and shriveled. The man was unconscious—almost lifeless.

Further investigation showed the man to be Robert H. Gardner, forty-seven years old, of Cleveland, Ohio. His condition was explained when it was found that he had been locked in the box car twenty-one days, without a bite to eat save three apples, which he had in his pockets when he entered.

Gardner, who has a wife and children in Cleveland, packed a merry-go-round in the box car in Frostburg, Md. While arranging parts of the machine so they would ride "easy," the door was pulled shut and locked. The car was of the thick-walled, almost air-tight type, and he could not make himself heard to those passing outside. Physicians give some hope that the man may live.

Some New Inventions.

A patent just issued to a California inventor provides a partition for dividing a bed into two sections separate from each other and secures the bedclothing in such manner as to form two separate compartments in the same bed, producing, the inventor claims, practically the same advantage as twin beds.

A New Jersey inventor has patented a method of treating wood to produce a substitute for cork, in which he seeks to remove all acid from the wood and then impregnate the wood with a solution of glycerin and water, after which it is dried for use.

In a recently patented combination kitchen table and ironing board the board is slid under the table when idle and pulled out and supported by a folding leg when needed.

A Minnesota inventor has patented a self-adjusting pail, with which grain can be automatically weighed and measured.

A camera operated by electricity has been invented for lowering into oil wells to photograph the conditions surrounding broken tools.

Taming Rockefeller Deer.

John D. Rockefeller's deer, at Tarrytown, N. Y., are becoming as neighborly as their owner at Pocantico Hills. Every morning six or more of them follow the mail man to the post office and to the railroad station, where he goes on Mr. Rockefeller's business.

The deer roam about the street, unmolested, and often allow people to pet them. Mr. Rockefeller delights in seeing them on his estate.

Spy With Four Sets of Clothing.

A German spy, captured near Paris and shot, had on four sets of clothing—the British uniform, the French soldiers' garb, his own, and a woman's dress over all.

McGraw at His Desk.

Manager John J. McGraw, of the Giants, is back at his desk in the New York club's offices. Mr. McGraw had little to say when interviewed about his plans for next season, but he announced that he had given up the idea of training in California. He now has on his hands the biggest baseball squad that a major-league club has ever carried, and in the next few weeks he expects to let out much of his surplus talent.

Manager McGraw plans to go to the training camp in Marlin, Texas, earlier in February than heretofore, and will have his eye on pitchers and a third baseman. He

NICK CARTER STORIES.

would not say anything about any contemplated change in the outfield, but it is quite probable that if some of the youngsters come up to expectations, there is likely to be some changes in the Giants' line-up for next season.

If the Giant squad gets into condition at Marlin as soon as Manager McGraw expects, it is not unlikely that he may take a team to the coast to play several exhibition games at the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

The management of the big show is anxious to have the Giants visit the coast, and if the club shows its best form early in the season, the Giant manager may decide to take the trip.

Makes Corn-shucking Mark.

Shenandoah, Iowa, has an entry for the best corn husker in the State. Orin Wiggins, of Oswego, Kan., who is husking corn for George E. Gordon, shucked 138 bushels in eleven hours. This was the most corn ever shucked by one man on his farm, says Mr. Gordon, who has lived on a farm four miles west of Shenandoah thirty years. His corn is making forty-five bushels to the acre.

Strange Shower Falls on California Town.

A remarkable fall from the heavens of large quantities of what is described as meteoric floss took place at Healdsburg, Cal. The shower, which began between seven and eight a. m., and reached its maximum about ten o'clock, was seen by all the inhabitants of the town.

According to one of the eyewitnesses, the material appeared high in the heavens, in a clear sky, as a mass of stars, lustrous metallic sheets, and silvery ropes. It reached the earth in various shapes and sizes, ranging from minute particles to sheets twenty feet square. It fell in such quantities that long ropes and masses of it hung from the telephone and telegraph wires.

When the substance reached the warm earth, it began at once to contract into fibrous masses, resembling flossy asbestos, though tests proved that it was not that mineral. Most of it soon disappeared, though samples were saved and sent to Director Campbell, of the Lick Observatory, and to Professor Tito Alippi, director of the observatory at Urbano, Italy.

Says He Can Raise "Titanic."

In announcing that the international oceanograph expedition will begin a seven-year cruise next May, Captain J. Foster Stackhouse, explorer and geographer, says that the expedition will visit the scene of the *Titanic* disaster to investigate the possibility of raising the ill-fated liner. He believes that the big ship can be located and raised.

A steel sphere, eight feet in diameter, is the latest device to aid in bringing sunken ships to the surface and in search for treasure lost in the depths of the sea. The sphere is equipped with a number of electrically operated devices to do the work. As it is lowered from its ship by means of a steel-wire cable, it throws beams from an electric searchlight to locate the wreck. If it is not found at once near the point where the vessel was lost, the bell brings its electrically driven propellers into action and moves about as desired, always in touch with the ship above by means of its cable, which carries telephone wires.

When the searchlight has located the wreck, so that the men within the sphere can ascertain its position through

the heavy glass windows, the bell is brought to the surface, and descends, carrying a large pontoon. The term pontoon as used in this sense means a water-tight cylinder placed beneath a submerged vessel and then filled with air to assist in refloating the vessel. These cylinders are equipped with motor-driven pumps for expelling their contents when the time comes for them to exert a lifting force.

As most of the wrecks of recent years are of iron or steel, the bell makes use of the electro magnet in order to fasten a number of pontoons to the sunken vessel. This is done by approaching the hulk and allowing the four large magnets to lie against the side of the wreck. The magnets are then energized and the bell clings firmly to the hulk, holding on with the force of many tons. This allows a great drill, set between the magnets to operate against the steel plates of the vessel, and a motor operates this drill so that a hole is bored in a very short time. Then, by an ingenious worm drive, the diving bell is shifted just a few inches to one side, after the drill is withdrawn. The pontoon carried down by the bell has been placed on the sea bottom meanwhile, below the spot where the device is operating. From this pontoon extend a number of chains, the loose ends of which are held up by floats. When the drill has bored a hole, one of these chains is gripped by an arm, also magnetized, which extends from the diving bell, and the pontoon hook on the end of the chain is set into the hole in the vessel, where it is automatically locked. The process of boring holes and inserting pontoon hooks is repeated until the pontoon is secured to the wreck by sufficient chains, after which the diving bell ascends for another pontoon, and attaches it in the same manner, continuing until the sunken vessel is encircled by these metal cylinders. The number required will vary according to the size of the vessel, of course.

When this work is accomplished, the tender is instructed by telephone to begin the pumping out of the pontoons, and the motor in each is started by the electrical-power generator in the ship. The men in the bell can observe the operation from a little distance, and send up instructions to pump out certain pontoons more rapidly than others, in order to bring the wreck right side up. As the water is emptied from these cylinders, they become more and more buoyant, until they strain at their chains, tug at the vessel, and finally raise it from the mud and bring it to the surface, where the tender ship can tow it to the nearest port for the recovery of its contents, or, if the vessel is not beyond repair, for overhauling and restoring to seaworthy condition.

In many cases the recovery of the ship alone would be worth the expense, while in others the treasure is immensely valuable. The location of scores of wrecks is no secret, but the methods of raising the sunken vessels has made the knowledge worthless. The Los Angeles man who has perfected this unique diving bell believes that he has solved the problem.

Our Flag Again on the High Seas.

A few days ago the *John Ena*, a big four-masted bark, sailed majestically through the Narrows into the lower bay at New York City. Recalling as it did the days when the lofty rigging of American ships dominated the sky line along the water front instead of the tall buildings which are now to be seen there, the arrival of the *John*

Ena was the first striking evidence to shipping men of the return of the United States flag on the high seas.

Since the new registration regulations went into effect, the rehabilitation of the merchant marine has made itself known practically every day in the arrival or departure of some steam vessel which had been changed to American registry, but the presence in the bay of an American-owned and American-manned sailing vessel of the type of the *John Ena* was the most eloquent reminder of all to those who could remember the old days. The *John Ena* came from Honolulu, Hawaii, with a cargo of raw sugar.

The records show that between September 1st and November 15th, eighty-four ships came under the United States flag through the new law, which extends American registry to foreign-built vessels. This was more tonnage than had been added to the American merchant marine in the previous twenty-five years. The American merchant marine now consists of 2,444 ships of 1,369,492 gross tons.

Of the eighty-four ships, seventy were British, eight German, five Belgian, and one Norwegian, disproving the contention raised when the legislation was pending that it was merely a scheme to make available and protect with a neutral flag the German ships tied up idle in American ports on account of the war. Practically all of the ships were American owned, flying alien flags merely because their owners built them abroad, where cost of construction and operation was low.

"This is a most satisfactory showing," said the commissioner of navigation, Eugene T. Chamberlain. "It proves that there was a considerable number of ships owned by Americans, but our laws were such as to prevent an American from hoisting his own flag on his ship if that ship happened to be built abroad. The great maritime powers—Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, and Norway—all had laws that permitted registry of foreign-built ships. They had been doing everything possible to build up their merchant marine, while we had hindered ours."

"I have great hopes now for the future of the American merchant marine. We have added 300,000 tons in three months and there is as much more existing American-owned tonnage that probably will take the flag. I look for a development of the shipping industry generally in the United States for many reasons."

From Forge to Chair of Senate.

Edward Schoeneck, next lieutenant governor of New York, started life as a blacksmith, became a stenographer to get a legal education, and later became a lawyer. Though still on the sunny side of forty, he has served two years as ward supervisor, four as member of Assembly, and four as mayor of Syracuse.

His father, Henry Schoeneck, came to this country as a young man and opened a blacksmith shop. He quit it to serve as a soldier, and on his return found his business pretty well gone. There was a large family of boys, and as they became old enough each in turn went into the shop.

Edward was initiated at the forge at fourteen, and for ten years worked there, first as a helper of his father, and after his father's death as the support with his older brothers of the family. While he worked at the forge he continued the study at home of the common branches. Before he was eighteen he decided to become a lawyer. He first mastered stenography and got employment in a

mercantile house and then awaited his opportunity. He found it in the law office of White, Cheney & Shinaman. Later he went through Syracuse Law School, was admitted to the bar, and immediately began practice.

The year he entered the law school he was elected supervisor of his ward. At the close of his term as supervisor, he was elected to the Assembly. He was then only twenty-eight years old. When Wadsworth became speaker in 1906, Schoeneck was one of the little group that moved up from the back rows into the "seats of the mighty" and became one of the forces in the reorganization of the Assembly under Wadsworth's general direction. When it was done, he announced that he proposed to stay home the next year and earn some money, but at the speaker's solicitation he went back. He remained only one year, however.

Then he resumed his law practice with the intention of sticking to it. But in 1909 the Republican party in Syracuse was in a desperate situation. The Democrats were preparing to nominate George W. Driscoll, brother of the then Republican Congressman from this district, for mayor. The Republicans had had the mayoralty for eight years, and there were two independent movements breeding which threatened trouble.

There wasn't a Republican candidate for the nomination. Driscoll, a popular man and a good spellbinder, was clearly to be the Democratic nominee. Each of the two independent organizations put up a candidate, both Republicans. He consented to become the candidate of the regulars and was elected. Two years later he was reelected.

Mr. Schoeneck ran for lieutenant governor with Stimson in 1910, having been picked for it by the veteran Francis Hendricks. This year Mr. Hendricks once more proposed that he become a candidate for the office, and it was at his suggestion that the former mayor began his two successful canvasses of the State, first for the nomination and then for the election.

Mr. Schoeneck is a robust, upstanding man, and likes outdoors. He likes to go shooting up at Lake Bonaparte or fishing at Otisco Lake, where he spends most of his summers. He holds the patience record for bass fishing at Otisco, where sometimes they bite and sometimes they don't. He plays good handball, baseball, croquet, but a "punk" game of tennis. He retains the manual dexterity of his manual-labor days, and could build a house if need be.

How Long Will War Last? Soldier Tells.

How long will the war last? No question is more frequently asked. Many prominent men, military experts, statesmen, and well-informed authorities have given their opinions. No one asked the soldiers, until the other day in a café in a little French town a correspondent happened to put the question to a French infantryman, who had spent many days in the trenches. And the soldier gave this answer:

"When everybody gets tired of slaughtering, there will be peace. It will come whether we are on the road to Berlin or not. It is one thing for to shout 'On to Berlin!' It is another thing to go there. When Germany is driven out of France and Belgium, I shouldn't be surprised to see her ask for peace. I suspect that by that time we shall have suffered heavy enough losses not to be arrogant. The idea of promenading across

Germany is not what appeals to our soldiers. They know what that would cost. Our soldiers are fighting for their homes and their country."

The soldier said he thought there would be peace by Easter. He was not averse to giving the Germans credit of being good fighters, and for having a splendid military organization. "But we shall beat them," he said. "We are beating them."

And so it goes. There are many interesting sidelights like this on the war which are not told in the routine dispatches.

Thirteen Dead, is Football's Record.

Football claimed thirteen victims in the season which is now practically over. Two of the players killed were on college teams. The others were either members of high-school, preparatory, or "free-lance" elevens. Tackling was responsible for more deaths than anything else. The list of fatalities is as follows:

Floyd McGinnis, only son of James McGinnis, a merchant of Ada, Ohio. Young McGinnis was tackled in a practice game September 21st, and was thrown hard. He rose from the ground, ran a few steps, and then fell dead.

Ray Allen, nineteen years old, of the Stanley High School, Sapulpa, Okla. He was tackled in a game played against the Tahlequah Indians October 3d, and died thirty-five minutes after being thrown.

Albert Wiseman, Sac City, Iowa, High School, suffered concussion of the brain when thrown in a game played October 9th. He died on October 10th.

Charles C. Hays, eighteen years old, a student in Fordham University, N. Y., preparatory school. Hays played in a game against St. Peter's College eleven October 12th. He tackled the runner, and others fell on top of him. A kick in the stomach caused injuries from which he died October 14th.

Carroll Olson, twenty years old, a player in the Milwaukee, Wis., Amateur Football League. Olson sustained a fractured skull in a scrimmage in a game at Lane Park October 11th, and died the following day.

William S. English, of Troy, N. Y., and member of the senior class of Mount St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, Md., was injured in a class game on the campus of the college October 12th, and died an hour after he had been hurt. He was not a member of the regular team.

Michael Kennedy, twenty years old, Pittsburgh, Pa., died October 20th after an injury sustained in a practice game in Lawrence Park, October 17th. Kennedy, when he was hurt, was running with the ball and made a line plunge. In doing so, his head was bent against his body, and paralyzation set in.

Lester Koehler, seventeen years old, and quarter back of a Detroit, Mich., high school, died October 29th, after sustaining injuries in a game a week previous. He received a blow on the head which developed into paralysis.

Dudley Gothrup, McAllen, Texas, eighteen years old, died almost immediately after having been tackled and thrown in a game November 1st.

James Levery, nineteen years old, of Ambridge, Pa., died in a hospital at Pittsburgh, November 2, having been injured in a football game at his home October 31st. He was jumped on in a scrimmage and his back was broken.

Fred Treece, seventeen years old, and quarter back of New Brighton, Pa., High School football team, died November 15th in a New Brighton hospital. Treece collided head on with a player from the New Wilmington High School in a game November 14th, sustaining a concussion of the brain.

Frank L. Wells, Dorchester, Mass., full back of the English High School, received a scratch on the arm in a game between his school and Salem High School November 7th. He died of blood poisoning in a hospital at Boston November 10th. Wells was an all-around athlete and junior member of the Boston Athletic Association.

T. G. Brown, of Knoxville, Tenn., and member of the Sewanee University eleven, died on the field October 3d after a scrimmage between two teams. Organic heart trouble was held responsible.

The fatalities this year fall one below those of last, when fourteen fell victim to the gridiron game. Only three times in the last fourteen years has the list been smaller, in 1901, 1908, and 1911. It does not compare with the casualty list of 1903, when the total reached forty-four, nor in 1909, when thirty lives were sacrificed. The smallest number was that in 1901, when only seven were killed.

Serious injuries have been on a smaller scale this year than last, although minor sprains and contusions have been as numerous as ever. As has been the case in many other years, the more severe injuries came in the early part of the season, and, as was the case with the fatalities, they were mostly confined to the younger set of players.

Over 71,000 people saw Harvard defeat Yale, 36 to 0, in the biggest game of the year. Harvard holds the undisputed title to the Eastern championship. The Illinois and Nebraska University teams have proved the best in the West.

New World's Record in Bike Contest.

A new world's record was set in the recent six-day bicycle race at Madison Square Garden, New York. Alfred Goulet, of Australia, and Alfred Grenda, of Tasmania, who won the race, covered a distance of 2,758 miles and 1 lap. The previous record was 2,751 miles.

Close behind the "Kangaroo team," as Goulet and Grenda are known, were Iver Lawson and Peter Drobach, the Swedish-Polish team. Jimmy Moran, of Boston, and Reggie McNamara, of Australia, were third. Moran had declared it would be his last race. The veteran made a desperate effort to win, but evidently his age told against him. Francesco Verri, of Italy, and Oscar Egg, of Switzerland, known as the Italian team, and Fred Hill, of Brooklyn, whose title was the American team, tied for fourth place, while George Cameron and Harry Kaiser, of New York, the Bronx team, finished last among the leading six.

One might imagine a six-day race as a terrible, and even cruel, test of human endurance, but the riders do not complain. Though they obtained very little sleep, they are not racked with the sufferings of exhaustion, as supposed. They eat continually, often over forty times a day, and it is not unusual for them to leave the track at the end of their long ride weighing more than when they began. They become more tired mentally than physically, and strangely, they insist that it is their arms, and not their legs, that become fatigued.

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757—Out for Vengeance.
758—The Poisons of Exile.
759—The Antique Vial.
760—The House of Slumber.
761—A Double Identity.
762—"The Mockers" Stratagem.
763—The Man that Came Back.
764—The Tracks in the Snow.
765—The Babington Case.
766—The Masters of Millions.
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62—Under Cover.
63—The Last Call.
64—Mercedes Danton's Double.
65—The Millionaire's Nemesis.
66—A Princess of the Underworld.
67—The Crook's Blind.
68—The Fatal Hour.
69—Blood Money.
70—A Queen of Her Kind.
71—Isabel Benton's Trump Card.
72—A Princess of Hades.
73—A Prince of Plotters.
74—The Crook's Double.
75—For Life and Honor.
76—A Compact With Dazaar.
77—In the Shadow of Dazaar.
78—The Crime of a Money King.
79—Birds of Prey.
80—The Unknown Dead.
81—The Severed Hand.
82—The Terrible Game of Millions.
83—A Dead Man's Power.
84—The Secrets of an Old House.
85—The Wolf Within.
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